RAILWAY LIBRARY. TWO SHILLINGS.

FIRST LOVE AND LAST LOVE

BY JAMES GRANT.

ROUTLEDGE'S SIXPENNY MINIATURE LIBRARY.

Cloth, gilt edges. (Postage 1*d.*)

1 The Language of Flowers
2 Etiquette for Gentlemen
3 Etiquette for Ladies
4 The Ball-Room Manual
5 Etiquette of Courtship & Matrimony
6 Carving
7 Toasts and Sentiments
8 How to Dress Well

JAMES H. GRAFF,
BALTIMORE
№1998.

122 Newton Forster
124 Jacob Faithful
127 Dog Fiend
129 Japhet in Search of a Father
131 Poacher
133 Phantom Ship
372 Star Chamber
375 Flitch of Bacon
378 Lancashire Witches
381 Mervyn Clitheroe
384 Ovingdean Grange
387 St. James'
390 Auriol
421 Rose D'Albret
423 The Old Dominion
425 Leonore D'Orco
428 John Marston Hall
434 Beauchamp
437 Arrah Neil
440 My Aunt Pontypool

LONDON: GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS.

Price 1*s.* (Postage 3*d.*)

BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

111 Stories of Waterloo *W. H. Maxwell.*
250 The Dark Lady *W. H. Maxwell.*
255 Violet, the Danseuse *Anonymous*
265 Royal Favourite *Mrs. Gore.*
266 Kindness in Women *Bayly.*
268 Ghost Hunter *Banin.*
291 Ambassador's Wife *Mrs. Gore.*
294 Old Commodore
By Author of "Rattlin the Reefer."
302 The Green Hand *Cupples.*
305 The Albatross *Kingston.*
321 Cinq Mars *De Vigny.*
324 Zingra, the Gipsy *Mrs. Maillard*
335 Ladder of Life *Amelia B. Edwards.*
338 My Brother's Wife
Amelia B. Edwards.
341 Pride of the Mess
Author of "Cavendish."
342 My Brother's Keeper
Miss Wetherell.
345 Scarlet Letter *Hawthorne.*
349 House of Seven Gables *Hawthorne.*
350 Tough Yarns *The Old Sailor.*
355 Whom to Marry, &c. *Mayhew.*
358 Lilly Dawson *Mrs. Crowe.*
361 Rita; An Autobiography
376 Henpecked Husband *Lady Scott.*
379 Little Wife *Mrs. Gore.*
385 Adelaide Lindsay
Author of "Emilia Wyndham."
391 Family Feud *Thomas Cooper.*
394 Nothing but Money *T. S. Arthur.*
396 Letter Bag of the Great Western
Sam Slick.
406 Respectable Sinners.
426 Moods *Louisa M. Alcott.*
430 Singleton Fontenoy *James Hannay.*

Price 2*s.* (Postage 4*d.*

By LORD LYTTON.
73 Paul Clifford
77 Last Days of Pompeii
93 Disowned
104 Lucretia
105 Harold
353 What will he do with It? vol. 1
354 Do. vol. 2
388 Strange Story
107 Zanoni. 1*s.* 6*d.*

By JAMES GRANT.
21 Romance of War; or the Highlanders in Spain
26 Aide-de-Camp
36 Scottish Cavaliers
125 Bothwell
134 Jane Seton; or the Queen's Advocate
135 Philip Rollo
193 Legends of the Black Watch
205 Mary of Lorraine
220 Oliver Ellis; or, the Fusiliers
224 Lucy Arden; or, Hollywood Hall
230 Frank Hilton; or, the Queen's Own
233 The Yellow Frigate
284 Harry Ogilvie; or, the Black Dragoons
241 Arthur Blane
242 Laura Everingham; or, the Highlanders of Glencora
246 Captain of the Guard
300 Letty Hyde's Lovers
364 Cavaliers of Fortune
382 Second to None; or, the Scots Greys
415 The Constable of France
419 The Phantom Regiment
439 The King's Own Borderers

By ALEX. DUMAS.
180 Half Brothers
284 Marguerite de Valois
2*s.* 6*d.* *each volume.*
285, 286 Vicomte de Bragelonne vols. 1 & 2.

By H. COCKTON.
254 Percy Effingham
271 Valentine Vox
408 George Julian
422 Stanley Thorn

By Miss WETHERELL.
330 The Old Helmet
367 Melbourne House
403 Ellen Montgomery's Bookshelf
404 The Two School-girls
431 The Wide, Wide World
432 Queechy

By ALB. SMITH.
119 Adventures of Mr. Ledbury
126 Scattergood Family
270 Christopher Tadpole
281 Pottleton Legacy
113 Marchioness of Brinvilliers. 1*s.* 6*d.*
The Medical Student. 1*s.*

By AUTHOR OF "WHITEFRIARS."
28 Whitefriars
53 Whiteball
67 Cæsar Borgia
132 Owen Tudor
244 City Banker
306 Mauleverer's Divorce

By A. TROLLOPE.
Dr. Thorne
The McDermots of Ballycloran
Rachel Ray
The Kellys and the O'Kellys
Tales of all Countries
Castle Richmond
The Bertrams

LONDON: GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS.

Routledge's Railway Library (continued).

Price 2*s.* (Postage 3*d.*)

BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

44 Night Side of Nature *Mrs. Crowe.*
50 Susan Hopley *Mrs. Crowe.*
68 Scottish Chiefs *Jane Porter.*
109 Pastor's Fireside *Jane Porter.*
118 Arthur O'Leary *Lever.*
152 Con Cregan *Lever.*
155 Prairie Bird *Hon. C. Murray.*
158 Captain Blake *Maxwell.*
167 Colin Clink *Hooton.*
168 Hector O'Halloran *Maxwell.*
170 Country Curate *G. R. Gleig.*
175 The Clockmaker. 2*s.* 6*d. Sam Slick.*
176 Rory O'More *Samuel Lover.*
179 Manœuvring Mother
Author of "The Flirt."
182 The Two Frigates. 6
190 Soldier of Lyons
195 Pirate of Mediterra
197 Mothers & Daughte
198 Quadroon
199 War Trail
210 Gilbert Gurney 1
211 A Wife to Order
214 Trevelyan
222 Pride of Life
226 Who is to Have It?
236 Two Convicts
237 Deeds, not Words
238 Feathered Arrow.
239 Secret of a Life
245 Caleb Stukeley *S*

96 The Hour and the M
107 Zanoni
139 Northanger Abbey
151 Peregrine Bunce
189 The Only Daughte

253 The Iron Cousin *Mrs. C. Clarke.*
264 Each for Himself *Gerstaecker.*
272 Sir Roland Ashton *Lady C. Long.*
287 Greatest Plague of Life *Mayhew.*
289 Sam Slick in England. *Sam Slick.*
293 The Young Curate *Anonymous.*
309 Matrimonial Shipwrecks
Mrs. Maillard.
310 Hajji Baba of Ispahan *Morier.*
333 The Two Baronets. *Lady C. Bury.*
365 Will He Marry Her? *Lang.*
366 The Ex-Wife *Lang.*
370 Emily Chester
373 Man of Fortune.
A. Fonblanque, jun.

Capt. Saunders.
's Story
Lady Long.
ich Police Spy
Disasters at Sea.
r. *Miss Cummings.*
Fielding.
Lover.
Thomas Miller.
Captain Chamiers.
Gleig.
m *Smollett.*
ter. *Theo. Hook.*
e
unter. *Edm. Yates.*
Do.

Anonymous.
e. Illustrated.
obinson do.
erton do.
me do.

ROBERT W WOODRUFF
LIBRARY
EMORY UNIVERSITY
Cor prudentis possidebit scientiam
1836 1915

ROUTLEDGE'S [illegible]URE.

Price 1*s. each.* (Postage 3*d.*)

5 Life of Nelson *Allen.*
10 Vicar of Wakefield *Goldsmith.*
31 Bundle of Crowquills *Crowquill.*
46 Infidelity, its Cause and Cure
Nelson.
119 Hidden Path *Harland.*
171 Acting Proverbs *Harwood.*
191 A Lady's Captivity among Chinese Pirates *F. Laviot.*
207 The Pilgrim's Progress *Bunyan.*
216 Balthazar: or, Science and Love
Balzac.
226 Christmas Hamper. *Mark Lemon.*
247 The Medical Student. *Alb. Smith.*
259 Love Tales by Heyse
Edited by G. H. Kingsley.
265 Riddles and Jokes. 3rd Series. *Do.*
266 Advertise: How? When? Where?
W. Smith.
267 Adventures of a Sporting Dog

268 Mrs. Jones' Evening Party
E. Routledge.
269 Toddle's Highland Tour *Do.*
274 New Charades for the Drawing Room. *The Author of "A Trap to Catch a Sunbeam."*
275 Sam Spangles *Stirling Coyne.*
276 The Sparrowgrass Papers: or Living in the Country
278 A Sea-side Sensation. *Chas. Ross.*
279 Lives of Conservative Statesmen
280 Fly-Notes on Conjuring
Col. Stodare.
281 A Week with Mossoo *C. Ross.*
282 Recollections of Harrow
283 Mixed Sweets
284 Mrs. Brown's Visit to Paris
Arthur Sketchley.
285 Miss Tomkins' Intended. *Do.*
286 Public School Matches

LONDON: GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS.

FIRST LOVE AND LAST LOVE.

A Tale of the Indian Mutiny.

BY

JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "THE KING'S OWN BORDERERS," "SECOND TO NONE," ETC.

LONDON:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,
THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE;
NEW YORK: 416, BROOME STREET

BY JAMES GRANT.

Price 2s. each, Fancy Boards.

THE ROMANCE OF WAR.
THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.
THE SCOTTISH CAVALIER.
BOTHWELL.
JANE SETON; OR, THE QUEEN'S ADVOCATE.
PHILIP ROLLO.
LEGENDS OF THE BLACK WATCH.
MARY OF LORRAINE.
OLIVER ELLIS; OR, THE FUSILIERS.
LUCY ARDEN; OR, HOLLYWOOD HALL.
FRANK HILTON; OR, THE QUEEN'S OWN.
THE YELLOW FRIGATE.
HARRY OGILVIE; OR, THE BLACK DRAGOONS.
ARTHUR BLANE.
LAURA EVERINGHAM; OR, THE HIGHLANDERS OF GLENORA.
THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD.
LETTY HYDE'S LOVERS.
THE CAVALIERS OF FORTUNE.
SECOND TO NONE.
THE CONSTABLE OF FRANCE.
THE PHANTOM REGIMENT.
THE KING'S OWN BORDERERS.
THE WHITE COCKADE.
FIRST LOVE AND LAST LOVE.

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,
THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE.

TO

GENERAL SIR WILLIAM KNOLLYS, K.C.B.,

COLONEL OF THE 62ND REGIMENT,

COMPTROLLER OF THE HOUSEHOLD TO H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES,

THIS STORY OF THE INDIAN MUTINY

Is Inscribed,

AS A MEMORIAL OF REGARD AND ESTEEM.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	JACK HARROWER'S BUNGALOW	1
II.	THE VANISHED YEARS	6
III.	THE CANTONMENT	11
IV.	THE WESTONS	19
V.	HOW THE EVENING PASSED	25
VI.	LENA ALONE	31
VII.	IN THE MOONLIGHT	35
VIII.	MESS-ROOM OF THE 54TH NATIVE INFANTRY	39
IX.	THE GARRISON FLIRT	44
X.	THE SKETCH OF THORPE AUDLEY	53
XI.	THE LOST CHANCE	59
XII.	BEHIND THE SCENES	65
XIII.	WHAT TRANSPIRED IN THE DEWAN KHANA	70
XIV.	WHICH TREATS OF VARIOUS MATTERS	78
XV.	HARROWER PROPOSES A SECOND TIME	83
XVI.	THE STRANGLERS	90
XVII.	MELLON'S NEWS	96
XVIII.	HOW THE THUGS SUCCEEDED	104
XIX.	LENA RECEIVES ANOTHER PROPOSAL	110
XX.	WHAT JACK OVERHEARD	115
XXI.	SUSPENSE	119
XXII.	WEDDING FAVOURS	125

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXIII.	TIDINGS FROM MEERUT.	132
XXIV.	KATE'S WEDDING DAY	135
XXV.	WHAT BECAME OF POLLY	143
XXVI.	IN THE FLAGSTAFF TOWER	151
XXVII.	THE MASSACRE	155
XVIII.	THE CASHMERE GATE	159
XXIX.	ANARCHY	164
XXX.	KATE'S WEDDING NIGHT	167
XXXI.	THE GUEBER	171
XXXII.	TO THE TOWER OF SILENCE	176
XXIII.	RETREAT TO MEERUT	181
XXIV.	MELLON AND THE PINDAROONS	185
XXXV.	FATHER AND DAUGHTER	190
XXVI.	MIRZA ABUBEKER	196
XXVII.	IN THE GROVE OF THE THREE TEMPLES	203
XVIII.	A HINDOO FARMER	209
XXIX.	IN THE FOREST OF SOONPUT	216
XL.	ALONE	222
XLI.	THE AYAH	226
XLII.	THE SNAKE CHARMER	230
XLIII.	A FAITHFUL OLD SOUBADAR	236
XLIV.	IN THE HOUSE OF THE ZEMINDAR	242
XLV.	NOUR MAHAL	248
XLVI.	TRACED AT LAST	254
XLVII.	FLIGHT RESUMED	258
XLVIII.	THE BROKEN BRIDGE	264
XLIX.	COLONEL PERSHAD SING AT HOME	268
L.	THE FAKIR MAKES A DISCOVERY	274
LI.	GONE	278
LII.	IN THE ZENANA	284
LIII.	NEWS FOR POLLY	290

CHAPTER		PAGE
LIV.	TRUE TO HIS SALT	296
LV.	ONCE MORE IN THE WILDERNESS.	302
LVI.	A SHELTER	308
LVII.	RECONCILIATION	313
LVIII.	HARROWER'S STORY	317
LIX.	WHERE THE WINE AND CHUPATTIES WENT	320
LX.	UNWELCOME VISITORS	327
LXI.	IN THE DEN OF THE DACOITS	333
LXII.	ON THE GANGES	340
LXIII.	A SEARCH FOR THE LOST	344
LXIV.	AGAIN IN THE STREET OF SILVER	349
LXV.	BY THE HILLS OF ALMORA	356
LXVI.	THE ARMY OF RETRIBUTION.	361
LXVII.	THE NIGHT OF THE EED	367
LXVIII.	A MARTYR	375
LXIX.	POLLY'S NOTE	384
LXX.	IN THE CUCHUC ODA	387
LXXI.	* * * * *	389
LXXII.	BLOWN FROM THE GUNS	394
LXXIII.	NEMESIS	398
LXXIV.	HODSON'S HORSE	405
LXXV.	THE TOMB OF HOMAION	409
LXXVI.	THE HIGH ROAD TO OLD ENGLAND	413

FIRST LOVE AND LAST LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

JACK HARROWER'S BUNGALOW.

"AND she was actually shot by Rudkin's side, you say, Mellon?"

"Shot dead, Jack, by those scoundrels, just as the Colonel drove his buggy, with the horse at full speed, through the cantonment. It was a miracle that he escaped, for the sepoys opened a cross fire on them!"

"Poor woman! In another month she would probably have been a mother—it is a horrible episode!"

"There will, no doubt, be an awful row about those greased cartridges, as the niggers call them; and we are only at the beginning of a very ugly business."

"A thorough Englishman, Mellon; you stigmatize them all as niggers, from the King of Delhi down to a Calcutta porter," said the other with a smile.

The speakers were John Trevanion Harrower, or, as he was more generally called, Jack Harrower, a captain of the Cornish Light Infantry, and his visitor, Rowley Thompson Mellon, a lieutenant of the Bengal Fusiliers, who were both stationed at Delhi in the memorable year of the Sepoy Revolt; the first indications of which they were discussing through the pleasant medium of brandy and iced soda water, together with a box of cheroots, while the long, hot hours of an Indian April night stole on, and the scent of the orange blossoms and of the tuberoses in "the Sahib's" little garden stole through the Venetian blinds on the soft and ambient air.

Both were good-looking young Englishmen, tolerably acclimatized, having long since got past the prickly heat, the curse of the boyish blood in India, and both were attired in white linen trousers and jackets, the buttons of which alone indicated anything regimental.

Old friends and college chums at home, they had been rivals as

prime bowlers and stroke oars at Eton and Cambridge; but Jack Harrower, the senior in years, was the taller, stronger, and, in aspect, perhaps, the manlier of the two, being close on six feet, with a compact head, closely shorn, curly dark hair, and straight, handsome features.

A good judge of horses and wine, with a steady hand at billiards, a firm seat in crossing the stiffest hunting country, he could ride straight as an arrow to hounds, pot a tiger from a howdah, or hurl a hogspear with any man in British India. A popular fellow wherever he went, Jack was always employed to scheme out hunting and picnic parties; could choose the right sort of men for the one and the gayest girls for the other, improvising a towel for a tablecloth, palm-leaves for dishes, and palanquin and carriage cushions for seats if necessary, and shady places for flirting al fresco. While totally destitute of vanity or Dundrearyism, he continued to be one of the leading men in Bengal society, where, from their scarcity, ladies are really objects of interest, beyond what the untravelled European can conceive.

Such was Jack Harrower, whose name appeared in the army list, with the enigmatical letters *p.s.c.* after it,* and who bore on his square open chest the medals for the battle of Goojerat and the campaign of the Sutledge; for Jack was past thirty, and began to reckon himself "somewhat of a fogie," though he conveniently removed that climacteric further off as time went on.

His friend Rowley Thompson Mellon (Thompson with a *p*, as he always took particular care to insist) was somewhat more of a dandy than Jack; he had his light brown flyaway whiskers cultivated to the longest extent, bandolined his moustache even when the thermometer was 100° in the shade, and always wore the smartest of light cork helmets with a bright blue veil round it.

"Yes," said Mellon, after a pause, during which the mahogany-visaged kitmutgar, or native servant, in obedience to a sign, refilled their glasses with foaming soda water dashed with brandy, "there will, ere long, be a dreadful shindy in John Company's *cutchery* (office); I can see the storm brewing and darkening."

"But tell me this over again, Mellon," said Harrower, as he stretched himself on the long cane easy chair, with a leg over each arm thereof; "by Jove, I don't quite take it all in yet."

"What?"

"This story about Rudkin and his wife."

"It was at Barrackpore, twenty-four miles from Calcutta, on the 29th of last month, that, as Captain Douglas of the Delhi palace guard informed me, a sepoy of the 34th Native Infantry—a wretch named Mungal Pandy, drunk with bang and maddened by hempseed soaked in intoxicating drugs, loaded his musket and

* Passed Staff College.

swaggered about in front of the lines, uttering uncouth yells and seditious cries. The adjutant and sergeant-major attempted to seize and disarm him, but were both severely wounded, while the whole regiment looked on, sullenly or passively, and, no doubt, approvingly. Colonel Rudkin, of the Oude Irregulars, driving through the Cantonment with his wife by his side, was fired on from the hedge of a compound, and the shot killed her. That shot was fired by Mungal Pandy, whose name is now bestowed upon every mutineer."

"Hush, Mellon—my kitmutgar is a brother of that fellow in the 34th, he is named Ferukh Pandy."

"Then I would set Mr. Ferukh Pandy adrift at once."

"For his brother's crime? Oh no, Mellon; that would scarcely be just; but go on—what followed?"

"Well, the Queen's 53rd and 84th, a battery of light guns, and three native corps were speedily on the ground. Mungal Pandy was hanged without much ceremony, together with the native officer who was in charge of the quarter-guard, and all the men of the mutinous regiment in Barrackpore were disbanded, stripped of their uniforms and turned adrift. But they are now spreading themselves like firebrands through the upper provinces, accusing the Feringhees of seeking to destroy their caste, through the use of greased cartridges; they inoculate with a spirit of mutiny the sepoys wherever they go, and after that mysterious distribution of chupaties, and other manifestations, such as those at Berhampore and elsewhere, it seems to me, that we Europeans have a volcano under our feet."

Lying back in his cane easy chair, with a cheroot between his fingers, and watching the smoke, as it curled from his thick dark moustaches towards the great dingy punkah that swung to and fro overhead, Jack Harrower made no immediate reply. He seemed lost in thought.

"I suppose," said he, after a pause, "that now, since his poor wife is gone, Mark Rudkin will be offering himself again to Lena Weston."

"I don't think so, even with all his d—d impudence," replied Mellon, colouring; "besides, the girl wouldn't have him now."

"Don't be too sure of that, Rowley; to my own sorrow, I know that she loved Rudkin very deeply."

"'Unluckily for the harmony of creation,' says some one, 'wise men do not always fall wisely in love.'"

"But I am not a wise man, Mellon, and never set up for being one. Odd, isn't it, that you and I, Rowley, who are such old friends, college chums, and all that, should have fallen in love with two sisters, those Weston girls—eh?"

"Better that we fell in love with two, than both have been spooney on *one*."

"That might not have mattered much, so far as *I* have been concerned, if I were to have no better luck than I have had with Lena——"

"And after her preference for that fellow Rudkin, to be jilted by him after all!"

"It was a shameful business, Rowley, and in the old duelling days, I would have paraded Rudkin at twelve paces for that very act—by Jove, I would;—for Lena had no brother to act for her, and her father, as a clergyman, was debarred from doing so."

"A very paradoxical proceeding that would have been on your part, Harrower, to fight a fellow for *not* marrying the girl you were in love with, and so extinguishing all hope for ever in your heart."

"Hope?" exclaimed Jack, taking a long and vicious pull at his cheroot, and then flinging it out on the verandah; "I never had much of that. Oh, Rowley, I always envied the even tenor of your success with her sister Kate; and Kate, though I loved Lena, is perhaps the prettier girl of the two."

"Well, we are engaged of course, and all that sort of thing," drawled Mellon slowly; "but the old Doctor won't hear of our marriage, till I get another step in the regiment, or my uncle, in the Opium Department, comes down with something handsome in the way of rupees. He has long since discovered that he has a liver and is as yellow as a buttercup; but he prefers to lead the life of a Sybarite in a house like a palace at Garden Reach, to aiding the matrimonial views of his nephew. I have some expectations at his demise—three thousand a year in India Stock and other securities—not that I wish him to die, even to gain Kate Weston—God forbid!"

And now there was a pause, during which Rowley Mellon began to hum his favourite ditty, "The Bengal Fusiliers."

"When I first began to love Lena and to drift *so* pleasantly from mere flirtation into a serious attachment," said Harrower thoughtfully, "when I used to tangle her crochet and twiddle the bodkins and wools in her workbox in the little drawing-room at Thorpe Audley, I little thought that we should be on such odd terms in India—in India of all places of the world—I, a rejected lover—a dangler—a moonstruck fool! Here, I thought, she would have been my wife, or *his*—and yet she is the wife of neither."

"When she refused you and accepted Rudkin, the Colonel was in desparate money difficulties; even a court-martial hung over him; so he married the rich widow of the Sudder Judge to free him from all his troubles. Lena knew that, and so she forgave him."

"And still more readily will she forgive him now that he is wealthy and free—free to choose again," said Harrower bitterly, as he gnawed his moustache; "but she was my first love, Rowley, and she shall be my last one!"

"Don't talk stuff, Jack."

"I swear it to you, Mellon!"

"First?" repeated the other incredulously.

"Truly so."

"Was there not something in that story of the pretty Hindoo girl?"

"Curse the story and the storyteller! Through it, and Rudkin's art, I first lost Lena Weston. But after all that has passed, if she should be mean enough to marry that fellow, now that he is a widower——"

"Nay, that will she never do; Madelena is a girl of high spirit," interrupted Mellon, emphatically.

"We shall see; but, as Ninon de l'Enclos asks, 'what mole can be so blind as a woman in love?'"

"Then, Jack, there was that devil of a scrape you fell into, at Chatham, with old Woodby, the Commandant of the Depot Battalion."

"Stuff, Mellon—how can you talk so?"

"Aha—about visiting his young and pretty wife, to whom you were perfectly unknown, while he was absent on a court-martial at Woolwich."

"Some day I shall explain that affair, for I fear an exaggeration of the story served to blacken me in the eyes of Lena Weston."

"You have a luck for falling into such scrapes," continued Mellon, laughing.

"Have, Rowley! say had—I'm a new man now," said Harrower, with a pleasant smile, for his old friend could not provoke him. "I had not forgotten Lena, as you know well, but had learned to be content, while she was no other man's wife (for I still hoped against hope) till destiny or the devil sent me up here, on detachment from Lucknow, and then the old flame was fanned anew, by the sight of her—and more than all, by the mere sound of her voice."

"She often speaks of you, and always kindly, Jack."

"God bless her for that, anyway!" said Harrower, in a thick voice, while his eyes brightened.

"Well, but now—"

"To-morrow I'll ride into Delhi, try my luck once more, and end the matter at once. Of course, you see the Weston girls every day—but don't say that I'm coming."

"As you please; but now I must be off, Jack—a nip of brandy, and then hey for the road. England expects every man to do his duty, so mine is to mount guard at the Cashmere gate to-morrow with some of the 74th—an infernal bore! Tiff with me in passing—my cook is a capital hand at curry-puffs. I'll try and drop into Weston's about tea-time, if I can leave the guard in charge of the Soubadar. What howling is that—a jackal, eh?"

"No—a beastly old Fakir or Dervish Hafiz Falladeen, outside

the gate of the compound, half buried in the earth and yelling for alms, from the Faithful and the Feringhees alike. Take my pistols with you in the buggy and look well to the caps."

"Thanks—another weed, and then I'm off like a bird."

Their parting words were now varied by a little talk about the black mare which Mellon had entered for the Planter's Plate at Sonepore, and the heavy books said to have been made up by Pat Doyle of the Fusiliers, Frank Temple of Jack's regiment, and other sporting men, on the running for the Delhi cup, till Ferukh Pandy (who was *supposed* to be totally ignorant of the tragic fate of his brother, the late Mungal Pandy, though it had been all detailed to him by the Dervish outside), with slimy and slavish politeness, and with cringing air and gleaming eyes, came to announce that "Mellon Sahib's buggy was at the gate of the compound, together with his cloak, as the dew was falling."

In another minute Rowley Mellon was gone, and in the clear air of the lovely Indian night, Harrower could hear him singing cheerily as he whipped his high-stepping horse, through the lines, a verse of an old Indian mess-room song :—

"Assemble, comrades, round the cot,
Bencoolen's nectar foams ;
What though a foreign clime 's our lot,
Though sever'd from our homes—
Shall soldiers trifling ills deplore,
Give way to idle fears?
No! fill the glass and toast our corps,
The Bengal Fusiliers!"

CHAPTER II.

THE VANISHED YEARS.

HARROWER'S bungalow, like all the rest in the cantonment, stood within a green compound of three grassy acres or so, enclosed by a thick hedge of prickly pears, where snakes and jackals lurked. Built of brick, and coated with white chunam, it consisted of one story, had been handed over from captain to captain successively for several years, and was now in a very dilapidated state, as what bungalow is not in an Indian cantonment? A verandah surrounded it, and there by day and night might be seen squatted a miserable, lean, and almost naked wretch, whose shrunken form seemed to be cut out of the darkest mahogany, tugging monotonously at the cord of the punkah, which passed through a hole in the wall, communicating with the sleeping apartment of Harrower Sahib.

The latter's sitting-room and its appurtenances had all the cob-

webby, rickety, and shabby air peculiar to the military bungalow. The table, minus a cloth, was usually strewed with empty soda-water flasks, amid which stood a bottle of Cognac and a Cawnpore cigar-case, for the use of chance visitors; there, too, lay a few dog-eared volumes of the "Railway Library," though no locomotive had as yet sounded its whistle in the Upper Provinces, save a few miles above Allahabad; and on a side table lay the remainder of Jack's literary property, Army Lists, "Field Exercise for the Infantry," "The Articles of War," &c.; with a brace of revolvers, and hunting-whips, flasks, and spurs.

In one corner stood a couple of Regulation swords; in another were a double-barrelled rifle and hog-spear. A few water-colours of English scenery, left by a predecessor, who died of jungle fever, were nailed on the walls, and, though faded and fly-blown, they were full of home and home memories of dear old England, that was more than fifteen thousand miles away.

A photographic album, with the treasured likenesses of old friends, Eton companions, and college chums, lay on the side table —poor sun pictures, now sorely faded in the land of the sun; but in Jack's bullock trunk were similar memorials, of "the loved, the lost, the distant, and the dead," that, as he said, "were too sacred for every fellow's inspection and off-hand criticism."

Such, with a few locks of hair, some grey and white, dry and withered, are generally the most valued household lares of the military exile in the East; and in that same baggage-box Jack Harrower kept his mother's farewell gift—a Bible, with her maiden name in it—for it had been a gift to her from his father, in the days of their courtship.

He and she were lying side by side in their graves now, under the shadow of an old English church, far, far beyond the sea. Harrower was usually a devil-may-care kind of fellow; yet often in his tent, on the slopes of the Himalayas, and in camps by the Jumna and Ganges, had he looked at the signature and date—*Mary Trevanion*, 18...—and it seemed to him that the period looked old, very old, and the name odd, very odd, for he had never known her but as his doting and devoted mother.

Little knew Jack that the treacherous Ferukh Pandy, his native kitmutgar, had in secret overhauled and appraised the contents of his entire baggage, looking upon each and all as his own lawful spoil, when the time that was *coming* arrived!

Harrower had spent a dashing military life in India, and had gained more than one medal in the campaign, under Lord Hardinge, against the Sikhs. He was strong in frame, cool in head, and rather fancied himself a thorough soldier and man of the world now; yet he lingered in his chair long after his friend's departure, and gazed listlessly through the open window, to where the distant groves of teak and pepul tree rose darkly against the clear blue sky of night, and where the red fire-flies were flashing in and out among the slender shafts of the graceful bamboos,

while sad thoughts of home, and old home memories, stole over him—memories of the happiness and the hope that once grew side by side with his young love—growing but to fade and die, even as green spring fades into mellow summer, and the summer, with all its glory, yields at last to winter.

How much in all his fate and relations of life had time, and death, and distance changed!

"There are a thousand thoughts lying within a man that he does not know, till he takes up the pen to write," says Thackeray; "so the heart is a secret place even to him, or to her, who has it in his own breast."

Jack sighed amid his reverie, and mechanically helped himself to a "night-cap," from the brandy-bottle; and though drowsy, and made more so by the soothing effects of the hookah, to which he now resorted, by the monotonous swinging of the punkah overhead, and the hum of insects among the shrubs without, his thoughts were far away in England.

"How dreary it seems to look back over the long vanished years," he pondered; "vanished for ever—less in the vastness of eternity than a raindrop in the ocean, and yet those years were my all of happiness!"

Far away in memory's eye he seemed to see a green and lovely English landscape, the upland slopes dotted with white sheep, or rich with golden grain, amid which rose the white tower of the old village church of Thorpe Audley, the landmark of that peaceful district for more than eight centuries—yea, ever since the Saxon archers bent their bows in vain at Hastings. The song of the thrush and the robin seemed to come from the beech and privet hedgerows, and the masses of dark green ivy that shaded the venerable arch of the Lichgate. Beyond was a stile, in the low churchyard wall. How well he knew every step of it, spotted with russet lichens and emerald moss! He could remember the graves, too, that lay beyond it, and the old church porch, with its stone seats, where the old and weary rested on Sundays, with its carved gurgyoles and quaint faces of dragons and wyverns. There he could see two figures, two lovers, whose favourite trysting-places were that arched porch and time-worn stile.

They were Madelena Weston and himself.

The whole memory was complete, even to the *ting-tang* of the old village clock, overhead. So thus, in fancy—in a waking dream—was Harrower at home again. "Home always means England," says a writer, truly; "nobody calls India home—not even those who have been here thirty years or more, and are never likely to return to Europe; for they always speak of England as *home*."

And with these thoughts, all freshly conjured up by Mellon's visit and the tidings he had brought of the tragedy at Barrackpore, memories of his love when it was in the flush of his success

with Lena, stole over him, and poor Jack Harrower became very sad indeed.

He retraced all the progress of that early passion, and its prosperity too, in Lena's quiet and secluded English home; their meetings by the old church stile, their botanical excursions among the old chalk cliffs, the limestone quarries, and among the green lanes, where the pear, the plum, and the apple tree entwined their branches overhead—happy, happy hours, till the time came of his rivalry with Mark Rudkin, then a dashing Light Dragoon, fresh from the terrors of the Khyber Pass, the glories of Sale's campaign in Affghanistan, and later achievements—an officer higher in rank, and, in some respects, more winning in manner than himself.

Then came the memory of their quarrel, and the bitterness of his rejection—his rejection for a rival, in whose favour he was compelled to quit England and return to India.

There a letter from Mellon informed him that Miss Weston had been deceived, jilted after all, as we have already related, and the story filled him with honest indignation; he felt no ungenerous triumph, but genuine pity for Lena.

Subscquent to all this, he had met her once on the course at Calcutta, for by a strange arrangement of fate, her father, the old Rector of Thorpe Audley, had fallen into such monetary difficulties, that he was glad to accept a Charge at Delhi, through the interest of his old friend, the Bishop of Calcutta.

Now they were all in India, and Rudkin was once more a free man; and from the compulsory or selfish motives of his marriage to the elderly widow, Harrower could not doubt but that the Colonel loved Lena still, and might remember that she was yet to be wooed and won.

As this idea occurred to him, he gave a nervous start, and tossed away the amber mouth-piece of his hookah, muttering—

"I'll not give Rudkin a chance of her again, if I can help it; I'll ride over to-morrow, seek an interview, and propose for her a second time; she can but refuse me—refuse me as she did before," he added, in a whisper.

Fondly memory went over all their intercourse in past years, and carefully was every token, instance, glance, and expression of esteem, regard, and of love, gleaned up and remembered now, to make an encouraging and comprehensive whole by which Harrower sought to convince himself that she loved him—that she *once had loved* him, after all!

Was this really true, or was the emotion of her heart "but a girl's fancy for the first man who had roused her vanity, and flattered her self-esteem?"

There had been times, even during the pleasant days of that happy summer at Thorpe Audley, when Harrower feared it was so, and strove to thrust the suspicion aside as unworthy of Lena

and himself; but, alas! when Rudkin came, all his fears of her fickleness became verified; doubt became conviction; and yet he loved Lena Weston still!

It did occur to him that there was a lack of pride in all this; but love and angry pride go seldom hand in hand.

"To-morrow, then! Pray Heaven I may achieve something more than teasing Polly, and playing cats-cradle with her, as I used to do at Thorpe Audley."

Polly was Lena's youngest sister. Poor Jack! in England six years before, he had been wont to put Polly on his knee, and toy and play at cats-cradle with her, and admire the delicacy and dexterity of her soft little fingers. He forgot that Polly was now sixteen, with golden hair and laughing blue eyes—a tiny yet lovely Hebe, who was the admiration of all the ensigns and cadets on the station, and her delightful fairy fingers were meant for better things than cats-cradle now.

"By Jove, I'm growing a fogie, and Polly is almost a woman!" thought Harrower, when the conviction that six years had elapsed since those sunny days forced itself upon him; "and now to bed—hallo, Ferukh Pandy, bring the chowry."

"Yes, master; bed and chowry ready," replied his copper-coloured valet, who was attired in spotless white—turban, jacket, and trousers.

The article referred to was a switch, like a pony's tail tied to the end of a drumstick, and with this Ferukh proceeded with great energy to beat and whisk the inside of the muslin curtains for nearly five minutes, so that not a mosquito or cockroach might remain between the roof and the hard mattress.

On his old and worm-eaten bedstead—old and worm-eaten, for the proverbial splendours of the Orient rarely find their way into the military bungalow,—a bedstead in which scores of subalterns had reposed in succession, when halting on their march through the upper provinces—tucked in with white mosquito curtains, in his night-shirt and linen drawers, the usual sleeping costume in India, Harrower spent most of the night in tossing to and fro, feverishly panting and perspiring, thinking of Lena Weston, her face and eyes, her voice, and the old church porch at home; and framing again and again the fashion in which he would break the object of his mission to her.

Then he would doze off for a minute or two to waken up with a nervous start and swear at the punkah-driver, who, squatted on his knees like a Mexican idol, had dozed off to sleep—happy fellow, in the cooler verandah outside, heedless alike of serpents and tigers, and the cries of the jackal in the prickly-pear hedge of the compound.

Close by his bed lay Harrower's sword and hunting-whip, for long before the terrors of the great revolt, Europeans seldom reposed in India without having a weapon at hand, for there had always been Thugs, naked thieves with their skins well oiled,

hyænas, tree tigers, perhaps a cobra four feet long, and other visitors, which, as the doors and windows are generally open, were apt to furnish the unconscious sleeper with a little nocturnal excitement.

Many a poor "white sahib" slept soundly that night beside his wife and little ones, all unaware that the mysterious chupaties were being distributed from hand to hand by hundreds of thousands: that the Hindoos whispered of Vishnu, and prayed to snakes and the monkey god, even as the Moslems were doing to Mahomet, for the blood of the European and the Eurasian alike; and that roving fakirs, active messengers, and disbanded sepoys of all kinds were stealthily gliding over India, stirring up the native troops to a revolt and general massacre; and that in the adjacent bungalows, the cavalry sowars, the artillery gholandazees, and the privates of the infantry, were plotting, planning, and arranging the terrible scheme, by which each regiment might murder the Feringhee officers of the others, and seize upon their wives and daughters as lawful loot or spoil, and yet, as they phrased it, "all remain true to their *salt!*"

CHAPTER III.

THE CANTONMENT.

HARROWER, after having brought his courage to the sticking point, and subdued every emotion of pride, felt his heart fail him when thinking over his intention of formally visiting Miss Weston next morning; so much of happiness, and so much of disappointment and future bitterness depeuded on the issue of an iuterview, after the lapse of so much time, and after all that had passed betweeu them, when he was home on leave in England; but he had not long given him for reflection, for after his snatches of sleep, he had barely enjoyed being sluiced iu his brick-work bath by the hands of Ferukh Pandy—who poured over him in succession the contents of several jars of red clay, which had been cooling all night in the verandah (if cooling it could be called),—when visitors arrived in the morning, which in polite Indian society means the time about which the later folks of the Western world are goiug to bed.

He was just begiuning to dawdle over the wing of a fowl and a piece of toast,—prepared for his early breakfast by Ferukh,—when his subalteru, Frank Temple, and Patrick Doyle, of the Bengal Fusiliers, dropped in from the neighbouring bungalows to talk over "this ugly business at Barrackpore," and to swear at the Pandies—as all now began to term the discontented sepoys.

Less in love than Harrower—or more probably not in love at

all,—they did ample justice to the breakfast mess which Ferukh prepared for them, and which consisted of a pyramid of boiled rice with butter, some green chilies, fish and cayenne, all mashed up together; and Jack, as he observed them, envied alike their appetites and their lightness of heart, for both were gay and heedless young fellows, very good-looking, and perfectly aware of that circumstance.

Though they were to act important parts in the events of the future, there was nothing very striking about those two officers: both were pleasant, off-hand, gentlemanly fellows, like scores of others to be met with in the mess bungalows of the three Presidencies, whether Queen's or Company's service.

Frank Temple was a lisping and somewhat affected English dandy; Patrick Morris Doyle was a powerfully built, black-whiskered, keen—some said wild—eyed Irishman, with a fine, deep, mellow, and rolling voice, which savoured of the brogue chiefly when he became excited, which his enemies—and they were few—were wont to own occurred pretty often.

"By the powers, but it *was* hot last night!" said he; "awfully so."

"Well, that is nothing new in India," said Harrower.

"Is this fish from the Jumna?" lisped Temple.

"Of course; where else could it come from here? But why?"

"Faith, it's delicious, old fellow," interrupted Doyle, with his black whiskers studded with rice; "even the holy trout of Kilgavower couldn't beat it, I suppose—not that I ever ate of it, thank God, though I have heard of those who tried to do so."

"What kind of trout was it?" asked Temple, languidly.

"I'm a county Mayo man, though we come of the ould Doyles of Clonmoney in Carlow; why the devil it was called Clonmoney, I don't know, for it's mighty little of that commodity we ever had amongst us. Well, I was born near the place where the immortal trout flourished. On the bank of a secluded rivulet near my father's house, there stands the ruined chapel and the holy well of Kilgavower, in the sanctity of both of which every true Catholic in that part of the country believes; and a famous place Kilgavower was, in the happy ould times, when Malachi wore his collar of gold, and something more, it's to be hoped, for decency's sake. Shortly before I was born, there suddenly appeared in the holy well a huge trout, swimming about; the devil such another fish was ever seen in the whole county of Mayo, for size, beauty, and sprightliness. It was all the colours of the rainbow, and was marked with the cross, and by St. Peter's thumb to boot. His eyes were like diamonds, and had the power of winking at the girls when they looked down into the well. All the country people far and near fed the blessed trout with crumbs and oat-meal, till he grew, by the powers, as big as a salmon! Well, there he swam in health and happiness for many a day, till a

Scotch regiment marched through Kilgavower, and that night a certain unholy Presbyterian drummer—a dark dog, he was—fished out the trout, and invited some of his comrades to feast thereon. It died hard, but it sputtered and browned famously in the pan, and the eyes and the teeth of the hungry sawneys watered as they watched it. But just as it was done to a turn, and ready to be dished, a hand came down the chimney—a long, lean hand and arm,—that tossed the fish into the fire, and in a moment it became a black cinder, exactly like the beautiful trout that the fishermen in the Arabian Nights caught in the enchanted pond, and whose miraculous cooking led to the discovery of the young king of the Black Isles, whose nether man, to his great annoyance, was turned into black marble."

This little Irish anecdote, which Doyle told with a considerable dash of the brogue in his tone, like everything else connected with Europe, was listened to with more attention than perhaps it merited.

"Have you heard the last news about the Weston girls?" asked Doyle, with a suddenness that, occupied as Harrower's mind was, gave him a species of galvanic shock.

"News," he repeated, colouring; "no—what news?"

"About Prince Abubeker—the King of Delhi's son."

"No—I don't think you ever get beyond the Arabian Nights, Pat—but what is it?"

"They say he has sent a Cashmere shawl, a champac necklace set with diamonds, and I don't know all what, to Miss Weston."

"Well," said Harrower, with scarcely perceptible irritation, "you, Pat, should be a good authority."

"For what?"

"Gup," was the curt response.

"That's mighty sharp, Jack, being Hindostani for gossip, in other words scandal, and I'm really fond of the Weston girls—that charming little Polly especially."

"It is whispered in Delhi," said Temple, who was a good-humoured little fellow, and whose lisp was partly affected, "that the Princes Mirza Mogul and Abubeker, with all their *suwarri* at their heels, always contrive to pass or follow the Weston family on the course."

"A couple of d—d impudent niggers!" said Harrower angrily.

"But of course that means nothing."

"Of course not," added Harrower, as he viciously bit off the end of a cheroot and prepared to light it; "who were those that rode alongside their carriage yesterday morning?"

"The Princes, I suppose, and Baboo Bulli Sing — that ferocious looking fellow—is their shadow."

"No—two ladies mounted on pretty Caubul ponies."

"Oh! two Scotch girls, who have come out to join their uncle, a judge—the Miss Leslies."

"On promotion, of course?"

"Faith, and you may take your oath of that, Jaek," said Doyle, "and yet the girls have money in plenty."

"Ah—the overland route rather spoils that sort of thing now," lisped Temple, as he lounged back on a eane easy ehair, and prepared a cigar; "so returned goods sometimes find their way baek to Bath and Brighton again."

"No other person was with them?"

"Only little Dicky Rivers of the 6th Bengal."

Harrower felt thankful that the newly-made widower had not "turned up," as he mentally phrased it, for, in his jealousy and anxiety, he feared that Rudkin might lose no time in making his appearanee as a suitor at Delhi, though deceney, and the rules of society, even in India, forbade sueh a proceeding within so short a time.

"They hinted to me—" Temple was beginning.

"Who?" said Harrower sharply; "the Seoteh girls?"

"That they thought the fair Lena rouged a little."

"Lena Weston—*gup*, I say—mere *gup* again," replied Harrower, sharply; "there are no fellows in India like the Bengal Fusiliers for that, so we of the Cornish Light Infantry must beware of it as a besetting sin, Temple; it shows jolly bad taste."

"By my soul, but it's mighty unpleasant and sharp you are, this morning, Jaek Harrower," said Doyle, "but it would only be fair if Miss Weston did add to her own natural beauty."

"If possible," interrupted Harrower.

"The odds are mueh against a girl here after her twentieth year is past; and in a plaee like Delhi, with a thermometer at 98° or 100° in August, she won't bloom as if in the Ridings of Yorkshire, or on the Wicklow mountains, in Ireland, God bless it!"

"How spooney Rowley Mellon of yours is on Kate," said Temple, still persisting in a speeies of messroom gossip, whieh, as it jarred with his own secret thoughts, made Harrower writhe with impatienee; but he kept his countenance admirably, for his thick dark moustaehe eoneealed the quiver of annoyance on his short and handsome upper lip, and his elear honest eyes had learned the art of smiling, even when his heart was sore.

The long, hot Indian day wore slowly on, after the formula of the early morning parade was over, and Harrower remained in his bungalow, or on the verandah, in his shirt and drawers, dozing, smoking, imbibing bitter beer, and, after he had tossed a novel aside, faneying that he was studying that polyglot medley ealled Hindostani, by turning over the leaves of a dictionary.

At last evening came; he dined early and alone at the nearest mess-bungalow, made a earefnl toilet and ordered his horse, a eommand which set the *bheestie* or water-earrier, the *syce* or grass-eutter, the groom, and a seore of other native servants in a state of activity, for no one there performs more than one special

piece of work; but as straws or puffs of smoke will show how the wind is setting in, indications of the coming storm were visible even within the narrow circle of Harrower's compound; so studiously sullen and inert were the native servants, and so long did each in succession linger over his hubble-bubble or quid of bang, that an hour elapsed before the horse was accoutred and at the door.

"By Jove, I'll make some of you fellows look alive with my whip, next time I give an order," said Harrower angrily, as he came forth; "I say, Ferukh, give that sword-belt a wipe, will you; it is covered with dust."

"Sword belt leather, sahib; bullock's leather, perhaps."

"And what the devil if it is?"

"Unclean animal, master—not good to touch; and Ferukh Pandy very good caste," replied the valet, salaaming and edging away while putting his dingy palms together, as the Bengalees generally do, when mildly remonstrating.

"Caste be ——" Jack was about to say something very unpleasant, but thinking it not worth while, he whisked the belt with his handkerchief, and buckled it on.

"Low caste—pariah!" muttered Ferukh, with a furtive glance of hate and malice in his glossy black eyes.

Harrower put on his sun-helmet, which had a flap, or fall of white linen that covered his neck and ears, like the caps worn by the Templars of old, and it certainly set off to the best advantage his dark, straight features. He wore a scarlet shell-jacket open, with a light linen vest, and a handsome fellow he looked as he rode away, all unconscious of the strange, malevolent, but very intelligible glances that were exchanged by the copper-coloured inmates of his household, a picturesque-looking set of Pandies, mostly clad only with a course red cummerbund round the loins, and a white turban, an attire which, if not gaudy, was certainly simple.

Beyond the gate of the compound there still loitered the Dervish Hafiz Falladeen. This creature was one of those fanatical but cunning and sensual religious beggars who are to be found in all parts of India. A filthy orange-coloured shirt was almost his only garment; his long and dirty grizzled hair was greased and matted, and his tawny face and naked breast were daubed with coarse bright ochre. Round his waist he usually wore a living serpent, of some innocuous species, as a girdle; now it was round his neck, and its sharp head and fiery eyes were visible among the masses of his beard.

Now self-buried to the arm-pits, he was one of that lazy kind who will sometimes remain near a camp or village for a fortnight, refusing to go away unless well paid for it, and threatening that if they die, their blood will be upon the heads of all who have neglected them, and thus they become a source of terror as well as respect to the ignorant Mussulmans; but ere long it was

known that the Dervish Falladeen had other objects in the cantonment than the mere collection of alms.

"Master—Sahib, tarry and hear me!" he howled in Hindostani, as Harrower rode past.

"I have heard you and the jackals every night long enough. I can tarry another time," replied Jack.

"You cannot, Sahib—you cannot," cried the Dervish, impetuously.

"Indeed—and why can't I?" asked Harrower, checking his horse for a moment.

"Because time belongs to no man, least of all perchance to you."

"Ah—to whom, then?"

"God and His only Prophet. Is it not written so?—deen! deen!" replied the Dervish, throwing up his arms, "and in their names, I pray you, alms!"

"Cauting old humbug!" said Harrower, as he tossed the beggar an anna, or half-rupee, and rode on.

Those who have been stationed at Delhi may remember that the cantonments were on hilly ground, about three or four miles distant from the new city, which could be seen from them, spreading along the right bank of the Jumna, a magnificent city amid a sandy plain, but seated on a range of rocky hills. It was girt by grey granite walls, above which its high minarets and gilded domes towered into the clear unclouded sky; the mighty mosque of Shah Jehan, that rises from a terrace nearly a mile square; the palace of the Mogul Dynasty, with all its towers and battlements; the ruins of the older city far beyond, with the vast dome of Homaiom's tomb, and the enormous column of the Kutub Minar, rising, with all its galleries, to the height of two hundred and fifty feet, covered with arabasques and verses from the Koran: all those striking features were visible clearly and sharply in the bright splendour of an amber and gold Indian sunset, which threw their purple shadows to a vast distance over the white sandy plain.

"And there is now the home of Lena Weston!" thought Harrower, as his horse picked its way through the cantonments; "how different from the old English rectory of Thorpe Audley, with its Tudor gables and mullioned windows, which I was wont to watch from the Chalk Hills, and think with joy that my heart lay under its quaint roof of yellow thatch, among the green woods of the old Chase. Now—now time and place, and circumstances are changed indeed! Maria Edgeworth says truly, 'The romance of real life certainly goes beyond all other romances.'"

In the circle of English home society, a jilted or disappointed man might not return to his fair one, like the moth to the candle, especially after a lapse of years; but circumstanced as Lena Weston and Harrower were—the latter having never ceased to love the former—and being now cast together far, far up-country,

in the central provinces of India, the matter was very different, and now his aspirations turned to Lena, as those of a Hindoo to his holy Ganges, or a Mussulman to where Mecca and the Kaaba lie.

A busy scene were those Delhi cantonments of the 38th, 54th, and 74th Bengal Native Infantry.

The sepoy lines were several streets of huts, formed of bamboos pointed up with mud and thatched with brown straw. On the right and left flanks of these lines were the huts of the soubadar majors and other native officers, with little courts of mud-walls around them; and in these wigwams every sepoy had one apartment, or zenanna, into which no man, save himself—not even the colonel or officer of the day—dared to penetrate, for in it he contrived to seclude together an incredible number of female followers and relations. Amid these lines was the bazaar of each regiment, a large booth crowded by wrangling sutlers, rice-merchants, dealers in shawls, pipes, tobacco, and bang, with jugglers, tumblers, Fakirs, snake-charmers, fortune-tellers, and indecent dancers, whose vagaries as a multitude it required all the energies of the provost-marshal and the cantonment magistrate to repress.

The brigade had just been dismissed from evening parade, and with shrill shouts the supple and bony, but ungainly, sepoys were hastening to throw off the already hated tight red coat and pantaloons, and to don their linen drawers and turbans, and fall to cooking their pilaff, which to them is exactly what roast beef is to a Briton, or to dine on a piece of bread dipped in the nearest water-tank, while swarms of dark-skinned imps, with lean limbs and huge paunches, gambolled about them in utter nakedness.

As Harrower proceeded, he became painfully sensible of being shunned and avoided, as the passers had evidently no desire to accord the salute usually given to an officer.

When crossing the sandy plain that lay between the lines and Delhi, he saw a cloud of dust approaching, and amid it several bright points were glittering. It proved to be the two sons of the old King of Delhi, the Prince Mirza Mogul and his brother Abubeker, accompanied by all their *suwarri*, or retinue. They were seated in a handsome open London-made carriage, surrounded by mounted attendants, all richly clothed, wearing polished helmets, with flaps of chain-mail, and armed with glittering spears, tulwars, pistols, and shields, that were covered by silver bosses. Around, and more especially preceding them, was a herd of wild-looking and half-naked Indians, shouting their titles with stentorian lungs, and running at full speed to keep pace with the carriage horses.

Amid this singular staff there rode, in his full uniform, Captain Douglas, a Company's officer, a soldier-like man, who held the post of Commandant of the Palace Guard; and by his side rode Baboo Bulli Sing, the commander of the King of Delhi's

native troops, a Mussulman of forbidding and most ferocious aspect.

Harrower checked his horse, and saluted the Princes, who made him a suave and even profound salaam in return, and both of whom he could perceive to be of sinewy and athletic figures, though as *blasé* in bearing as Indian voluptuaries could be. Their eyes black as coal; their complexion pure copper; their lips thick and sensual, fringed by a slight moustache. They wore conical caps, surmounted by white feathers; rich shawls were bound about them by brilliant jewels, and a mass of diamonds, and other precious stones, sparkled in the hilts of the daggers and pistol-butts, which were stuck in their gorgeous cummerbunds or cashmere sashes.

"Going into town, Harrower?" asked Captain Douglas, reining in his horse for a moment.

"Yes—to Dr. Weston's; you know him, I think," replied the other, unwittingly revealing somewhat of the thought that was uppermost in his mind.

"Take care, Harrower," said Douglas, laughing; "those girls of his are very pretty, and there is always a certain amount of matrimonial impetuosity among us in India when the thermometer verges on 98°."

"Bah! you forget how long I have been here—and that we were together at Ferozeshah, and on the Sutledge."

"Ay; when so far up country as we are, the male sex always preponderate among Europeans, and a fellow is pretty safe; but take care, Harrower, or you'll get hooked—every one *is* hooked who sees Miss Weston."

"Indeed—is she so captivating?"

"She is; and she has refused ever so many fellows—Lancers, Hussars, and Infantry men, Queen's service, as well as John Company's, and no end of civilians, since she came here, three years ago—so beware, Jack."

"All right; there is no fear for me," replied Harrower, in the same bantering tone; "though I have heard that to see the Weston girls mounted for an evening ride, with a staff of redcoats and civilians hovering about them, is one of the sights of the place, and quite as stirring as those Delhi Princes make, with all their picturesque rabble. Good-bye—I see that amiable warrior, Baboo Bulli, looking impatiently for you."

They separated with a laughing nod.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WESTONS.

THESE reported offers may all be garrison *gup*—wretched local gossip; yet, if so," thought Harrower, "if true—what could her motive be in systematic refusal? I was discarded, and Rudkin had married."

How little could Douglas, as he galloped after the Delhi Princes, know the secret that actually loaded the heart and tongue of him he bantered, and the thoughts that occupied him so much, that he forgot to visit Mellon at the Cashmere Gate, and, like one in a dream, passed along the bustling and crowded streets of the city, and through the Silver Square, as it is named, till he reached the house of Dr. Weston, which was situated within the spacious garden, and close to the bank of the Jumna.

Harrower knew the house well; he had not been long at Delhi, yet daily had he ridden past it, in the hope of seeing Lena or some of the family.

It was a stately mansion, with a great number of large windows; the walls and pillars were all of the whitest plaster; a spacious verandah surrounded it, and between the slender columns which supported the latter were large green blinds of split bamboo, to exclude the heat of the sun during noon.

On the balustrade above the cornice a number of crows were perched, and amid them were three great adjutant birds, with long, lean legs, enormous beaks and pouches, dozing in the evening sunshine.

The durwan, or door-keeper, to whom he gave his card, said that—

"The sahib was at home, and the three mem-sahibs too."

The gong was then banged to announce a visitor.

It sounded odd to hear "the Weston girls" of that quaint old parsonage-house at Thorpe Audley spoken of thus, in the capital of the Moguls, by the valet, a black-bearded, red-turbaned, and white-caftaned "Ali Baba," who salaamed Jack Harrower (through the marble vestibule of the reverend Doctor's mansion beside the Jumna), and who rejoiced in the name of Assim Alee.

"What effect will the presentation of my card have upon her?

"'*Captain John T. Harrower,*
H.M. Cornish Light Infantry.'

Will she, or her father, first receive it?" thought he, as he found

himself alone in a spacious drawing-room, the lofty windows of which opened to a magnificent garden; "I would almost wish the latter, for I always knew that the good old Doctor really loved me—the son of his old friend."

It is a peculiarity of the human mind, when greatly excited or over-anxious, frequently to remark and remember the veriest trifles, the pattern of a wall-paper or of a carpet; hence, while left to his own reflections for a time in the drawing-room, Harrower fidgeted about with one hand in the hilt of his sword, and his sun-helmet in the other, and took in all its details at a glance or two.

It was spacious, and its smooth white walls were lofty; but their great spaces were broken by numerous large English prints, in satin-wood frames, such as Landseer's "Bolton Abbey in the Olden Time," "Laying down the Law," "Deerstalking," and so forth, varied by the "Charge of the 16th Lancers at Sobraon," and in a place of honour a portrait of "Victoria the Begum of England—the Queen of the Feringhees," as the native servants, not very respectfully, styled her Majesty.

Between these pictures, and projecting from gilded brackets, were the great conical glass wall-shades, to keep the oil-lamps when lighted from being blown out by the elaborately-moulded and gilded punkah, which hung overhead, with great angular spaces cut out of it, so that it might be swung to and fro at full stretch without sweeping away the crystal chandeliers, which were thriftily shrouded in yellow muslin bags.

Carpets there were none, but matting of the finest kind covered the floor, and all the damask sofas and other furniture were European, and of the most recent fashion, though the ornaments were most of them Oriental; thus China flower-vases, Burmese idols, and Hindoo gods were plentifully strewn about the marble side-tables, always to the wonder and disgust of the Mussulman kitmutgar and the ayah, neither of whom believed in graven images as objects of taste.

Harrower bestowed a nervous glance at the card-basket, and another at the music on the open piano—a fantasia of Thalberg's—dreading to see Rudkin's name in either place. The fantasia, however, was merely inscribed "Dicky Rivers to his Cousin Polly," and he saw on the table some novels of Bulwer's and others, handsomely bound, and these he remembered to have given to Lena in the vanished times, and their names were still on the fly-leaves.

She had preserved these, at all events—but books are scarcely to be got up country.

Though she can have no home comforts amid all the clumsy and Oriental splendour of India, the English lady must always have her drawing-room, wherein she can show the newest things—brought up country from Calcutta by the steamer as far as Allahabad, or further now by rail—and where she can enshrine, as

household gods, the farewell presents given her when she left her happy English home, a weeping and a wedded bride, for a married life of long and splendid exile in the land of the sun.

A silk curtain, which served for a door, suddenly unclosed, and once more Jack Harrower found himself face to face with Lena Weston, who held his card with a somewhat tremulous hand, and the silk drapery with the other.

Honest Jack's heart seemed to leap to his lips as he saw her, yet he made a tremendous effort to appear as calm as—as she did.

Madelena Weston was rather under the middle height; she was entirely dressed in white muslin, without an ornament of any kind, or even a ring upon her fingers. The muslin dress came close round her slender throat, and the fine form of her white shoulders and taper arms could be seen through its delicate texture. Her face was pale, and her features delicate and regular; her eyes and their lashes were dark, and had a divine softness in their expression generally. The great masses of her hair, which was almost black—the darkest and glossiest brown, at all events—were gathered up and braided smoothly away behind her little white shell-like ears.

Having lost her mother early in life, Madelena had been by force of circumstances compelled to act a maternal part to her younger sisters, and as the mistress of her father's household, and the dispenser of his alms among the poor at Thorpe Audley, she had therefore attained a certain amount of matronly and worldly confidence beyond her years; so now she was to all appearance perfectly calm and collected, before the man whom her reproachful heart told her she had treated cruelly some five years before in England, and who she well knew, from the information of Rowley Mellon and others, loved her still!

Yet a keener observer than Jack Harrower might have detected beyond the sweetness of her lovely dark and dove-like eyes a strong expression of combined wonder and perplexity, kindliness and interest, as with smiling and parted lips she held out both her hands to him, and said, with nervous rapidity of utterance—

"Captain Harrower, this is kind of you—most kind—so like you—to find us out; and papa will be so happy to see you again."

Harrower bowed, muttered some well-bred commou-place reply, and merely took her hands in each of his, and retained them for an instant. It was all so different now from *then*.

"How long have you been in Delhi?" she inquired.

"A fortnight—we came up by railway to Agra."

"A whole fortnight!"

"My company has been going through a course of musketry instruction," stammered Harrower; "thus every morning has been fully occupied——"

"And the evenings would no doubt be occupied too! Oh! these mess-bungalows and billiard-rooms are great attractions."

"I was sent up here, I don't know why, unless to strengthen the garrison, in case of disturbances—the greatest arsenals in India are in Delhi—and—and—I was just able to find you out this evening," said Harrower, whom her apparent coolness piqued, though almost every evening since his arrival he had ridden past the house at least once.

They seated themselves on opposite sofas, and after a time Lena said, while using a large feather fan, which she took from a table close by—

"It is a pleasant custom this, in India, for strangers to call on the residents, such as we are now; though I fear railways will do away with it."

"I did not call, Miss Weston, because I thought myself a stranger—but rather as an old friend," replied Harrower, in a voice that was singularly calm, when the emotion that agitated his broad chest, and made him vibrate in all his stature of six feet, less an inch or so, is considered.

"A stranger! I should think not, my dear Harrower—my valued friend, and the son of my old and valued friend!" exclaimed a cheerful, but familiar voice, while one hand was laid on his shoulder, another clasped his right hand, and he found himself greeted by Dr. Weston, a good specimen of a suave, jolly, and easy-going English churchman, who had found it certainly no small inconvenience, at his years, to uproot all his old-established maxims, plans, and home-comforts, and to quit his snug old parsonage, among its English woodlands, for the office of pastor in the red-hot, scorching City of Delhi, to acquire a taste for curry, chili, and chutnee, and, in lieu of the *Times*, to put up with the Bengal *Hurkaru*.

His hair was white as snow now, but his blue eyes were bright and clear, even as those of Kate or Polly, who hurried in to welcome Harrower, and who were both very beautiful girls.

"Ah! Polly, dear—how you have grown!" said Jack.

"Harrower!" exclaimed the lively girl, "dear Jack Harrower, whom we all loved so much at Thorpe Audley! I have not seen you since I gave up wearing short frocks and frilled trousers! How fond you used to be of Lena, and how she blushed when once I caught you kissing her in the shrubbery!"

"Polly!" exclaimed Dr. Weston, warningly; for this reminiscence made them all feel uncomfortable, and when Polly began, there was no knowing when she might end, so in the present instance she was not to be put down.

"Dear, dear old Jack Harrower! Oh! this *is* delightful!" she exclaimed, springing up and kissing him; "I shall never forget how often I have ridden on your head and shoulders at home, in dear England!"

Polly might have blundered out with many other things, had

not tea and coffee been announced; and darkness having suddenly set in—as there is no twilight in India—the kitmutgar proceeded to light the lamps in the wall shades, and the huge punkah, with its deep fringe, began to heave to and fro overhead.

"Welcome, Captain Harrower, again, say I—and God bless you!" said Dr. Weston, kindly patting Jack's head of close, curly hair, as if he were still a boy. "I am glad to be able to say *Captain*, for you were only a subaltern when we last had the pleasure of seeing you. This is truly an unexpected delight!"

"And how do you like India?" asked Lena, feeling that she must say something.

"You forget that I knew India well, even before I had the pleasure of seeing you, Miss Weston," replied Harrower, with gentle reproach in his tone, while toying with his coffee-cup.

"You remember," said Kate, "that we saw you on the course at Calcutta, soon after we landed?"

"Yes, but for a moment only. It was in November, I think, when the evenings there are so delightfully cool, and where, by gun-fire, about five in the morning, everybody is astir, on foot or in carriages, on the course, greeting each other in the grey dawn—a strange sight to a European."

Polly was a bright and blue-eyed mischievous English hoyden, with a wealth of wonderful golden hair, and to Harrower she seemed to be still the same Polly who used to drop burrs into his pocket, piu papers to his coat tail, and tease him and Lena, it appeared now so long, long ago, at home.

The Indian sun had already stolen the English roses from her soft cheek, and the girl of sixteen was as pale and creamy in complexion as Kate, who was twenty, and Lena, who was five years older, but her girlish drollery and waggish *espiéglerie*, made her very winning, and a source of great amusement to her father, who doated on her.

Kate's beauty, though she was a fair blonde of the purest Saxon type, was of the same character, but in many respects superior to that of Lena. She had a bright, happy, and perfectly contented expression. Engaged to Rowley Mellon, and feeling assured that within a year, at most, she would be a bride, she was taking all the enjoyments that came in her way—even flirting a little when Mellon was absent—and in our Indian garrison towns there is always plenty of excitement and amusement.

"I am truly glad to see you again under our roof, dear 'Jack Harrower,'" said she in a whisper, while taking his arm caressingly between her hands; "glad, as you are Mellon's friend, and for the sake of the old times."

Harrower's heart swelled as she spoke, and he felt a vehement desire to give the beautiful Kate a tender embrace.

The storm of grief, of bitterness, and of wounded self-esteem, which had swept through the breast of Harrower, when Lena first proved false to him, and preferred his rival, had all agitated,

perhaps in a keener degree, the heart of Lena, when *her* turn came, and had been endured by her, deservedly, as he knew; and yet he pitied her, and was generous enough to doubly hate the man who had served her—exactly as she had served *himself!*

The drawing-room was brilliantly lighted now, and as Lena sat by his side on one of the great, yellow damask fauteuils, Harrower, while listening to her voice, that stirred his inmost heart, and while talking of common-place things in a common-place way, could not keep his thoughts from wandering back to the Lena of other times.

Were those the same dark tresses, and the same little white fingers, with which he had toyed? Those lips the same that he had kissed in moments of happiness, known to themselves only? Those the same eyes that had looked with love into his, for hours together, before *that man* came?

How, in his heart, he cursed him!

So there they sat, side by side, sipping their coffee, and talking—as who did not?—of the Barrackpore mutiny, while the watchful and listening kitmutgar glided noiselessly about, with a silver jug of goat's milk.

Lena felt all the awkwardness of the situation, and was alternately quiet and cordial, but always so studiously polite that Harrower thought that his warmest and most undisguised welcome was from the worthy Doctor, from Kate and Polly, and little Willie, an orphan cousin, the pet of the whole household, a curly-haired and rosy English child, about six years old, who in the usual fashion, resented vehemently being borne off to bed, when the ayah Safiyah and the time arrived together.

Colonel Rudkin's name was sedulously or tacitly never mentioned, and Harrower was painfully aware of an awkwardness, even in this reticence, when speaking of the very outrage in which he had borne so tragic a part, and at a time when the Colonel's name was on all men's tongues; but now Rowley Mellon, risking "a rowing and a scrape," came from the Cashmere Gate; and there also dropped in a young ensign, named Dicky Rivers, of the 6th Bengal Infantry, on leave in Delhi, Polly's cousin and sworn admirer, a very handsome boy, but saucy and confident beyond his years, very proud of his first red coat, and of being, in virtue thereof, admitted as the equal of men in society.

There also came the two Misses Leslie, very pretty, but very affected, Scotch girls—the newest arrivals by the P. and O. line, who, as Mellon whispered, "had come up country to seek for husbands, and shake the pagoda tree." Captain Douglas of the Palace Guard also dropped in, accessions for which Harrower felt deeply thankful, as the conversation became thereby more mixed and general. Young Rivers alone made a little awkwardness when he arrived.

"Well, Dicky," said Harrower, "how goes it with you?"

"Hey—what—hallo," exclaimed the blundering Ensign, his

face radiant with surprise and pleasure; "you here, Harrower, *after all!*"

"Shut pans, or 'pon my honour, Rivers, I'll put you under arrest," said Mellon, in an angry whisper.

"Oh, fie—Mr. Mellon is actually talking 'shop' before ladies," said the unabashed Ensign.

"How does India agree with you, after Addiscombe?" asked Harrower, alarmed lest he might say something else.

"Oh, I'm jolly as a sand-boy, though what kind of boy that is, or why he should be particularly jolly, we never could find out, even at Addiscombe, and I think the question would have puzzled the examiners."

"Tea or coffee, Master Dick?" said Lena, with a little asperity in her sweet voice.

"Thanks—neither; I don't believe in such things, though I rather do in iced seltzer, or Bass's pale ale, and hope you agree with me, cousin Lena—at all events, I know Polly does."

The Misses Leslie and Kate Weston betook them to music, and under cover thereof, the usual local *gup*, or gossip, was discussed; the question—a very vexed one of disputed precedence at the last ball given by the General, between the ladies of Mr. Chili Chutney and Colonel Patna Rhys, the Oude commissioners; how Jones of the light cavalry had taken unto himself as wife a wealthy and beautiful, but unfortunately Eurasian, girl, and would be "tabooed" therefore; the palpable flirtations at the band-stand of the 54th Bengal; the success of the ice-club; the comfort, even splendour, of the Company's accommodation boats; matches made or broken off; but ever and anon, amid all these frivolous topics, were whispers of the coming trouble, and twice the name of Colonel Mark Rudkin made Jack's heart leap, and Lena's long, dark eyelashes droop.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE EVENING PASSED.

FOR a considerable period, old Dr. Weston, who really esteemed and loved Harrower, with all his heart, kept the Captain beside him, and with a friendly interest which was both flattering and soothing, plied him with questions, as to how he had spent his time, where he had served and been quartered, since they last met as intimates, which, as both knew well, meant that unhappy time when Lena evinced a preference for Rudkin.

She kept somewhat aloof from them, and busied herself with the other guests; but the mischievous Ensign took in the

whole situation at a glance, and, twitching her sleeve, whispered—

"Go and speak to him, cousin Lena—hang it! it is too bad of you to treat Jack Harrower thus; but perhaps you think old Rudkin will come to the scratch after all, now that he has got his neck out of the matrimonial noose."

"Silence, Dicky Rivers. How dare you speak to me thus!" whispered Lena, in the same tone, but with positive anger flashing in her eye.

Meanwhile, with his heart full of Lena, and his eyes upon her, it was a hard task for Harrower to be compelled to attend to the two Scotch girls, at the piano, and turn the leaves for them, while, like too many Scotch girls in general, instead of contenting themselves with some Scotch or English song, they squalled fearfully the operatic and spasmodic ditties they had learned at second hand, from some indifferent French or German governess.

A man of open, generous, and gentle disposition, Dr. Weston had been famous for his urbanity and charity at Thorpe Audley. Every morning a handful of silver was laid on his table at breakfast, for distribution in his walks, among those green English lanes his feet would never tread again; all that was over he dropped into the poor's box, at the churchyard gate.

A clergyman of the Christian church, in his broad, human, and liberal views of mankind, he did not think that he was doing evil, when to conciliate the wily and fierce Mahommedan population of Delhi, on their festival of Eed—the twenty-fourth of May—he annually gave them a couple of good, fat Patna sheep, though there were Methodist missionaries, Scripture readers, and others, who raised their voices against him for so doing, and distributed bitter tracts to the sepoys, who lighted their pipes and hubble-bubbles with them.

"And you think, sir, that our Indian troubles are only beginning?" said Harrower, continuing a conversation they had begun.

"I fear so," replied the Doctor, as he lay back on the sofa, wiped his gold eyeglasses carefully, and shook his white head; "your genuine Englishman always sneers at that which he does not understand; here the religion, the ceremonies, the traditions, and the manners of these Mussulmans, Hindoos, and Mahrattas, are fair game for him! It is a dreadful mistake to treat contemptuously, and to trample on a vast and warlike people, as too many of our countrymen are disposed to do. Already they begin to know their strength, and to feel that we are intruders among them. Even a worm will turn, and why not the proud and pampered Brahmin—the ignorant and misguided sepoy? Shallow reasoners, and sneering jokers, are a nuisance at home, in a land with a well-ordered police; *here* they are a danger and a curse,

for those Hindostanees, their blood once roused, are no more to be trifled with than the lions, tigers, and hyænas of their native forests."

"But in what did all this jolly row about caste originate?" asked Dicky Rivers.

"I can't tell, for the life of me," said Harrower, "but this I know, that every Brahmin loses caste who wears a buff-belt; yet they never seem to think of that."

"In the early part of this year," said the Doctor, "a fellow of low caste—or more probably of no caste whatever—asked a golandazee, or Brahmin artilleryman, for a draught of water from his *lotah*, or brass drinking vessel.

"'Never!' replied the Brahmin, disdainfully.

"'And wherefore?' asked the workman: 'when I am thirsty?'

"'Simply, because the lotah by your touch would be rendered unclean and useless to me.'

"'How particular we are about our caste to-day,' sneered the other, 'though you care nothing about handling and even biting the Queen of England's cartridges, which she makes up with the fat of her own pigs, bullocks, and other unclean animals.'

"The genuine Brahmin must live on herbs and pulse, and nothing that has ever had life must touch his hand or lips!

"Perspiring with rage and shame, and in an agony of mortification, at this reply and all it suggested, the Brahmin rushed through the arsenal and cantonments at Dum-dum, which lie six miles from Calcutta, calling upon all true sons of Brahma to abandon the use of the new Enfield rifle, and to cast away the cartridges, as they were not glazed, but *greased*, with the fat of unclean animals, a secret insult alike to Hindoo and Mahommedan!

"Too readily was the dangerous story believed; the mischief-makers in every regiment, the fakirs, dervishes, and moolahs, who hang about bazaars and cantonments, now proceeded by nods and winks, and words of dark meaning, and by reviving the prophecy, that the Time of Fate—the hundredth year after the battle of Plassey—was approaching its completion, to stir up disorder; and hence all the mystery of the greased cartridges. Native princes and deposed rajahs naturally wish to make the most of it for their own personal and selfish ends; and already the subsidized King of Delhi has ventured to order his people in their mosques and places of prayer, to recite a sorrowful song, expressive of humiliation for the downfall of the Mahommedan faith; and all this, taken with the distribution of the chupaties, leads me to fear, as I said, Harrower, that our Indian troubles are only beginning."

"The Princes of Delhi are surely disposed to be friendly,"

observed Harrower; "rumour says that one of them, Mirza Mogul, or Abubeker, I know not which, sent to you, Miss Weston, some handsome presents."

"Yes," replied Lena, colouring slightly, with a shade of annoyance, "the champac necklace is really beautiful. It was unpleasant to accept of them, even from a wealthy Delhi prince; but to have declined them would have given a serious offence, and caused gossip."

"Well, I'm blowed," began Ensign Rivers.

"Dicky—oh, fie—such language!" said Kate.

"Dicky, I am shocked!" added Polly.

"I'm blowed," persisted the Ensign, emphatically, "if I don't think some of those niggers are spooney upon my cousins! When they come upon the course like a couple of Ali Babas, with all the Forty Thieves after them, there is no getting near uncle's carriage then. They have been known to ride by it for an hour at a time, attracting the attention of all the civilians in Delhi, and making old Mrs. Patna Rhys ready to expire with envy and jealousy! But this is nothing; only think, Harrower, when our girls visited Cawnpore, the Nana of Bithoor—Naua Sahib—put his carriage and favourite white elephant at their disposal; and in exchange for a lock of her hair, gave Polly a glorious sapphire ring. But then, he chucks his sapphires and diamonds about as we used to do cherry-stones at Rugby."

"Oh, Dicky Rivers, such a griff you are!" said Polly, who was fanning herself with all the gravity of an Indian fine lady, as she nestled on a hassock by her father's knee; "and yet I can't help loving you, Dicky, for all that."

This made several officers laugh, and the Ensign blushed with pleasure, as he had never done since he stood before the chairman at Addiscombe, with the sword of honour in his hand and the Pollock medal on his breast, the hero of the prize day, and of his admiring mother's heart; for Rivers was a clever lad, but at an age when young men are apt to indulge in what the Americans term "tall talk."

His remarks about the Delhi princes made those who heard him smile; but there came a time when this admiration by royalty was remembered with alarm and pain.

"How that boy's tongue runs on!" said Kate Weston, shrugging her white shoulders.

"Let it run," said Harrower. "It is a joyous thing to be young," he added, passing his strong and sun-burned hand through Polly's golden curls.

"Why, Captain Harrower," said Kate, "you are not very old yet."

"I am old in heart, dear Kate," said he, looking into the blue eyes of the beautiful blonde, for Kate was, indeed, beautiful; "old when I was in my twenties, and I am thirty now."

He glanced at Miss Weston, who was talking to Captain

Douglas, and fanning herself with a great circular feather fan; and Kate gave him a sweet intelligent smile as she laid her hand on his, and slightly pressed it, with a kindness that could not be mistaken.

"Little Dicky Rivers is amusingly and undisguisedly smitten by his cousin Polly," whispered Mellon, as he leaned over the sofa behind Harrower. "How the little coquette flirts with him, teasing and flattering him alternately; it's a pretty picture to watch, but rather a funny one."

"Yes, when one is past all that sort of thing, Mellon."

"At your years, Jack?"

"Ay, man, at mine. But this fancy is all the better for Rivers; it will keep him out of scrapes with native girls, and, worse than all, with the half-castes. You know what these dreamy Eurasians, as they call themselves, are here? Indolent, ignorant, and worthless, but often very lovely, with no ideas in the world but for making love and studying the most alluring style of *deshabille*."

"He should stick to his books, and read more," said Dr. Weston, who partly overheard them.

"Ah, that remark was meant for *me*, I know," said the Ensign. "But what is the use of reading anything but Regimental Orders now when one is a soldier?"

"Why, Dicky," interposed Lena Weston, smiling at the forward but handsome lad, "you are exactly like the French officer, who said, 'There should be no other paper but the *Moniteur*—no other book in the world than the Army List.'"

"And that French officer was a sensible fellow. Books—pshaw! what's the odds, so long as you are happy? Hang it, uncle, I had enough of cramming at Addiscombe to last me for the term of my natural life; and what's the use of pens or ink to me now but to answer love letters and invitations, or to write guard reports?"

"Did you ever hear of the Shah Jehan?" asked Dr. Weston, a good-humoured smile spreading over his well-cut but rubicund features, as he surveyed the little officer through his spectacles.

"The Shah Jehan, uncle—no; who the deuce was he?"

Dr. Weston lifted up his hands with surprise, and Polly exclaimed—

"Dicky Rivers, you ought to be ashamed of being such a griffin. He built the new city of Delhi when Charles I. was king of England."

"Oh, indeed; but you are fresher from Pinnock's Catechism than I," retorted the Ensign.

"He rather agreed with you, nephew, in the idea that a soldier had no need of ink," said Dr. Weston. "History tells us that one of his soldiers having seized a beautiful female slave, who was the property of a scrivener, the matter was brought before him in the great hall of the palace yonder, but it became somewhat

intricate, for the slave loved the soldier, and totally disowned her master."

"The slave showed her good taste, didn't she, Polly?" insinuated Dicky Rivers.

"There was no evidence to decide it, so the Mogul affected to put off the case, and heard several others, and gave judgment on them. Then, as if by chance, he called for ink, and desired the stolen slave to prepare it. The girl did so, quickly and dexterously.

"On this Shah Jehan frowned upon her, and said—

"You have deceived me, woman, and I see that you must belong to the scrivener, as soldiers have occasion neither for ink nor slaves who can make it so well."

The night was now far advanced; champagne, beau-jolais, and seltzer water, well iced, had been handed round; several of the guests had retired in carriages and palanquins, and now the time came when Harrower had to order his horse, and Mellon offered to ride a little way with him towards the cantonments.

The atmosphere was oppressive; but in addition to the great punkah that swung overhead, producing a strange effect to the eye as it swayed past the chandeliers, a pleasant coolness was given to the room by the kitmutgar, Assim Alee, dashing about plenty of Rimmel's vinegar from the establishment of the Feringhee Hakeems, Messrs. Syrup and Bitters, in the Strand, at Calcutta, and brought up country by the steamer to Allahabad, or the rail to Agra.

Somewhat of the old sinking of the heart came over Harrower when he rose to retire. He had paid this visit and "broken the ice" certainly, but he had achieved nothing more; for no sooner was he in Lena's presence, after their long estrangement, than he felt how abrupt it would be to make any reference to their former relations, and that, for a time, no new proposal could be made under all the circumstances.

Lingering with his cork helmet in his hand, he drew near Miss Weston, and said—

"Your papa has kindly pressed me to come and see him as often as I may find it convenient while detached up here."

"It will give us all the greatest pleasure, Captain Harrower," said she, looking not at him, however, but at the Chinese hieroglyphics on her fan.

"I have by me a trifling sketch that might please you—here in this strange country, at least."

"A sketch?"

"Yes, Miss Weston, if you will accept it."

"Thanks—I shall only be too happy; but of what is it?"

"A little drawing I once made of—of—Thorpe Audley: the village, the church, and the Lichgate. You remember *it?*"

"Perfectly."

She grew paler as she spoke, but her voice never wavered. Jack's did so, without disguise.

"I shall bring it when next I do myself the pleasure of visiting you."

"Thanks," she said, hurriedly.

"And now good night."

"Good night, Captain Harrower—good night."

He merely touched her hand, and that was all. He had no recollection of how he bade farewell to Dr. Weston, to Kate, or Polly; but he found himself mechanically, and by mere force of habit, looking to the girths and bridle of his horse, at the porch of the house, and heard Mellon and Rivers talking to him while lighting their cigars.

Just as they mounted, a window opened on the first floor above the verandah, and the golden tresses of Polly appeared in the blaze of the moonlight, as she laughingly kissed her hand to them, repeating a dozen of "good-byes;" and then, to tease her cousin Rivers, she parodied a song as he rode off, and sang it after him, like a girlish hoyden as she was:

"With his sabre on his brow,
And his helmet by his thigh,
The soldier loves the kitchen maids,
And they cold meat supply."

CHAPTER VI.

LENA ALONE.

HARROWER'S sudden and perfectly unexpected visit gave occasion for many a surmise betwcen Kate and Lena, and caused much thought to Dr. Weston that night.

The good clergyman was well pleased to see that the feelings of Captain Harrower for his family—perhaps for Lena—were still all that he could desire, for Jack was the son of one of his oldest friends, so he was not without the wish, and the secret hope, that our captain of the Cornish Light Infantry might be his son-in-law, after all.

Lena he had never controlled in her affections, and he almost regretted that he had not, in some wise, attempted to do so.

He thought her self-willed, singular, and somewhat capricious. He knew that she had refused several very eligible offers since they had landed in India, but why she did so he never questioned, as in such matters he left his daughters to be each the mistress of her own actions, as he had perfect faith in them. Rudkin's conduct was certainly a shock to him, as it had been to all the family, so it was tacitly understood that the Colonel's name was a forbidden word in the household, as he and Kate had perceived that,

whenever it had been mentioned by chance, Lena was stung to the quick, and painfully too.

It was twelve now—midnight—and every European in Delhi was as sound asleep as heat, mosquitoes, bugs, and squalling babies, or howling jackals would permit them to be.

Long after Harrower, Mellon, and Rivers had ridden off, Lena remained in her own room, alone, and gazing out into the glorious Indian night, lost in thoughts that the voice, the presence, and the eyes of her early love had summoned back to her heart, as it were, out of the mists and oblivion of the past.

She sat at an open window, surveying the wonderful beauty of the moonlight, where far away beyond the Jumna rose the five domes of Homaion's tomb, and the great column of Kutab Minar, a king who reigned in Delhi six hundred years ago. The effect of dome, and spire, and minar, with the brilliant radiance that brought out all their details—the powerful effects produced by the silvery sheen on one side, and the strong, deep blackness of shadow on the other—were very striking.

The red fire-flies were flashing about; the perfume of the rose and the orange ascended to the window where she sat, for beneath was a garden exceeding in its beauty that of "King René's Daughter."

> "A garden of the tropics—studded o'er
> With all rare flowers! Behold the lofty palms!
> I could be sworn this paradise arose
> In some fair summer night, when Dion gave
> One golden hour to her Endymion."

But unlike Iolanthe's garden in that sweet valley of Provence, there came through it at times, on the stillness of the night, the melancholy howl of the jackal, from the jhaw-jungle and groves of teak and pepul trees beside the Jumna.

On the terrace below, more than one adjutant bird—a large and ravenous species of heron, held in great veneration by the Brahmins, and so named for its supposed military strut—was nestling with its head under its wing, after being gorged with toads, lizards, and small serpents; but Lena saw only where, about four miles off, a few lights burned dimly in the cantonments, far away beyond that magnificent palace where the dynasty of the Moguls—the representatives of the great Timour—had been, outwardly at least, content to reside in comparative obscurity, since Lord Wellesley destroyed the power of Scindiah, and assigned Delhi to Shah Allum as a dwelling-place.

Towards those lights and tents she knew that Captain Harrower was now wending his way.

Jack would come again, she knew, and she wondered if he would come soon; not, however, that she wished for that event in the slightest degree. There was, no doubt, an awkwardness

about his coming to visit them at all; though past events and bitternesses were known only to themselves and to—ah, well!—to Rudkin, who she knew dared not speak of the matter—in society, at least.

So, with all her friendship for Jack, with all her esteem for his frank, manly, and generous character, and for his unchanged and unflinching love for herself, Lena felt that she would rather he did *not* visit them; yet she would have been disappointed had he, without doing so, left Delhi for the head-quarters of his regiment, which was further down the country.

"He loves me still, poor fellow!—still, poor fellow, after all!" she whispered to herself.

It was impossible for her not to feel gratified and flattered by this supposition, but she also felt personally humiliated by the conviction that she had used him shamefully; and more than ever had she been sensible of this after Rudkin, a professed male flirt, had broken his hastily formed engagement with her, to marry another for her wealth.

Rudkin! she clenched her little white teeth, and a dangerous gleam passed over her dark grey eyes, as she thought of him. She knew not whether she once loved, or now hated, that man most—a doubt that would not have been flattering to Harrower, had he known of it.

Even if her old love for Jack revived, she could not accept him now, as a *dernier ressort*, with honour to herself, and still less with honour to him; so far better would it be, and so she repeated to herself a thousand times, that his visits should not be resumed; and she resolved that during the short time his company was quartered in Delhi, she would certainly endeavour to avoid him as much as possible.

For the last three years they had seen each other but once, and then it was on the course at Calcutta, in the presence of many strangers.

But she knew he would return—her heart told her so; and he had promised her a sketch of Thorpe Audley church and village, and of the Lichgate arch, where lay the mossy stile at which they used to meet. She knew what *that* gift imported—either a reproach or a remembrance.

Oh, the time that seemed to have passed since those days, and the miles and miles of roaring sea that rolled between them and dear old England now!

It seemed strange to reflect, that had Rudkin never come between them, she might have been for the last five years John Harrower's wedded wife!

With a quick, small hand, Lena threw back nervously the heavy braids of her dark brown hair, as if she would court to the utmost the breath—breeze it could not be called—of the hot Indian night.

She strove to analyse her feelings more closely than she had

ever done before. Jack she had certainly loved truly and fondly, with all the passion of a young girl's first love, before Mark Rudkin came, with his more stately presence, more insinuating, more worldly, and more practised manner—the manner of a man who had conquered alike the love and the scruples of many women; and there came to her memory a quotation from the French—a piece of musty sentiment from Jean Jacques Rousseau—which the Colonel had used on many occasions, and generally found very effective; and it was a maxim with which Lena had actually striven to salve her conscience and to comfort herself, for her own fickleness, till Rudkin—married the wealthy widow:—

"We may love, and *think* we love very truly, and yet find *another*, to whom we cling with all our strength, as if it only required our two hearts to make one perfect and harmonious whole."

With this piece of sophistry—poison instilled by Rudkin—she had, we say, sought consolation for crushing, if she did not break, Jack Harrower's heart; and yet he loved her still—she was sure of it!

She felt certain that she had acted falsely, vilely, and been justly punished; and that she was not worthy of a love so steady and so true—a love that neither time, falsehood, change of scene, nor circumstances could destroy; but which must, nevertheless, be unavailing, as she would never marry Jack now, even if he asked her a hundred times.

Suddenly a rather mortifying idea flashed upon her! What if the continuance of Harrower's love was all a fancy, a vanity of her own? What if it had evaporated long ago, or found another object? What if she had become perfectly indifferent to his heart and eye, and if he was engaged to be married to another, and all her recent reflections and speculations were as moonshine in the water?

He had certainly looked "unutterable things" to-night, but had said nothing of much importance.

Would Rudkin come to visit them now—now that he was free? She hoped he would not *dare* to do so; and yet she feared the influence of his presence on herself, and that she might be lured to love him after all. And then she wept amid her doubt and depression, and after a time summoned the ayah Safiyah to dress her hair before she retired to rest.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE MOONLIGHT.

WITH all its defects and drawbacks, Harrower thought this one was one of the most delightful nights he had spent in India.

He would treasure its memory as one of the bright spots in his existence, and so he said to Rowley Mellou, as with the reins dropped ou their horses' necks, they rode slowly towards the cantonments in the moonlight, after they got rid of the Ensign, who informed them that he "hung out at an hotel in Chandney Choke, where he should be glad if they would beat him up any evening."

"Good-bye, Dicky," said Rowley Mellon; "I am to breakfast with the Westons—any message for Polly?"

"You're a lucky fellow, Mellou; but don't quiz me about Polly," replied the Ensign, whom the champagne had made sentimental. "I remember," he added, while smoothing what he conceived to be a fair moustache, "a novel that I used to read at Addiscombe, unknown to the masters and professors. It asserted that 'there is no harm at all in kissing one's cousin wheu one likes—it is quite as harmless and much nicer than kissing one's sister, and is on the whole a very pretty occupation. The little supplementary acts of putting one's arm round the waist, laying one's hand on the shoulder, and playing with the dear little cousin, are even more harmless than the kissing.' That style of study was better fun than parsing Cæsar's Commentaries, digging at Straith's Fortifications, and Shakespeare's Hindostani."

"It is to be hoped, Dicky, you will confine your cousinly attentions to Polly," said Harrower, laughiug.

"I have no other intentions, Jack; and if you mean to join the Westons on the course to-morrow, be sure to come on a kicking horse."

"Why?"

"Because there is always a mob of those civilian fellows about them, and the dust spoils one's uniform—but here is Chandney Choke—good-bye."

And at last they were rid of Dicky's chatter.

That night Harrower had stood by Lena's side at the piano, and turned the leaves for her, while she played and sang; again he had looked dowu on that beloved head, on the tiny and delicate ears, the slender white throat and curved shoulders, as he had done in other times.

Again he had heard her voice thrilling him with an old song she had been wont to sing long, long ago, and his soul had been

stirred within him by mingled delight and sadness. Once she lifted her dark eyes inquiringly to his, when in his entrancement he forgot to turn the leaf; and the look she gave him seemed so like one of her old lover-like glances coming back out of the happy past, after all the hopeless years that had rolled away!

In that evening Jack Harrower had lived all the past and all his lover days over again.

"But to what end may all this be?" he asked himself.

"You didn't turn up at the Cashmere Gate to-day," said Mellon; "Ripley of the 51th, Willoughby and Doyle of ours, tiffed with me—if, indeed, a mild glass of grog and a cheroot can be called tiffin."

"No—the plain truth is, Rowley, that I forgot all about it."

"Or remembered only Lena Weston."

"Yes, that's about the mark. Oh! Rowley, I'd do anything to please that girl—anything, from selling out of the corps to jumping into the Jumna. All the past has come over me again!"

"Has it come over *her?*" asked Mellon, drily, as he watched the smoke of his cigar ascending in spirals.

Harrower shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Delusions are delightful, certainly, while they last," said he. "It must be very gratifying to the vanity of a griff or a greenhorn, in his first red coat, to fancy himself in love with a girl like Polly Weston; or still more, to imagine that another man's wife conceals an unfortunate attachment for him; but it is a devil of a thing for a plain matter-of-fact fellow like me to be in love with a girl like Lena Weston, who adheres to such a swain as Mark Rudkin, whether he be faithful or false—lover, husband, or widower!"

"If she do adhere," replied Mellon, almost laughing at his friend's vehemence; "but I am sure she has dismissed him from her mind for ever."

"Would to heaven I could think so!"

"Try—take courage; Kate, I know, and all the family, are with you; so perhaps, Jack, we may be brothers-in-law yet."

"Engaged people are often a bore in society, and stupid when together, Mellon; but it was a pleasure to me—circumstanced as I am with Lena—to observe the polite tenderness, the affectionate confidence and ease, which characterised the bearing of you and Kate Weston to each other."

"Well—when two persons are intending or hoping to pass their lives together, sufficient time may be found for being spooney or mooney, without acting 'like birds on Valentine's Day.'"

"True, Mellon."

"I believe I should have been married to Kate long ago, but that I am deeply dipped with one of those loan banks, which are

the curse of our Indian service—besides owing three thousand rupees to the Agra."

"If you don't book up well on the Sonepore Plate—"

"I'll have to do a little bill with some of those rascally Parsees; it will be all the same a hundred years hence, and, as Rivers says, what are the odds, so long as you are happy? I had made up my mind to marry a dowager, or a copper-coloured heiress, such being best suited to my monetary and matrimonial purposes; but the moment I saw Kate Weston, I felt there was an end of all that. Through my second uncle, Colonel Skulk, of the Honourable Company's Opium office, I was offered an appointment as collector of something or other at Curryabad; but I had made a capital book on the Calcutta race, and foolishly declined. Now, ere I can be a Benedict, I must wait for my company at least."

"As there is no purchase in the Bengal army, and you are not far up the list, you may have to wait long enough for your promotion, Rowley."

"I hope not, for dear Kate's sake, as well as my own," said Mellon; "I dislike long engagements."

"I got my company at six-and-twenty, for only three hundred pounds above the regulation price. We were then on the march to Moultan."

"A bad style of things, Harrower, and such should not be."

"Still they do exist, and, as I can't alter, I may as well avail myself of them."

Mellon now left him to be present with his guard at the Cashmere Gate, about the time that he expected his friend Colonel Ripley (who was field-officer of the day) would make his night visit to inspect the post; and Harrower proceeded alone, and immersed in thought, towards the cantonments, walking his horse slowly, and without any cause for fear, though the very air was full of rumours of danger, and few officers now rode abroad without pistols in their holsters.

No outrages had as yet been committed in the kingdom of Delhi, and the roads around the great city were, comparatively speaking, as safe as those in the neighbourhood of London, though there were old men who could remember them to be pretty much the same as they were in the days of Thevenot, an old traveller, who speaks of them as being "infested with tigers, panthers, and lions, and robbers (*i.e.* Thugs) of both sexes, who catch travellers by throwing nooses with great dexterity about their necks, and then strangle and rob them. They likewise plant handsome women on the road, with their hair dishevelled, and feigning to weep for some misfortune. Unwary travellers, being moved by compassion, or touched by their beauty, enter into conversation with them, or take them up behind on their horses, which gives them an opportunity to throw a noose over their heads, and men are always at hand to assist them."

Such were the roads about Delhi in "the good old times," whose departure the sepoys were beginning to lament.

Several officers coming up at a rapid trot, overtook Harrower at the gate of the cantonment, where, of course, a sepoy quarter-guard, under a Jemmidar, or native subaltern, was posted.

"You'll dine with us to-morrow, Captain Harrower?" said one, whom he recognised to be Colonel Ripley, of the 54th Native Infantry, a frank and jolly officer.

"With pleasure I would—but——" pondered Harrower, thinking of when his next meeting with Lena might be.

"No buts—you must come," resumed the Colonel; "a man like you on detachment can't think of dining alone in his own bungalow—it's absurd! To-morrow is our weekly guest night. There's Mellon, Temple of yours, little Rivers of the 6th, and many more, coming. I'll send your name to the khansamah (messman) of ours, and you'll drop in when the drum beats."

"Thanks, Colonel—you'll excuse me if I cannot stay late."

"No more can I—I've to visit the Brigadier at five in the morning, and to-morrow the overland mail closes."

On Harrower entering his bungalow, he was surprised to find it dark, deserted, and empty.

He called loudly for wax candles, but received no reply.

"Qui hi—qui hi!" (who's there). This is the usual mode of summoning a servant in India; but there was no response. With the aid of a lucifer match, he soon procured a light; but found that he would have to prepare his own hookah if he preferred it to a cigar, and to whisk the horse-hair chowry for himself, ere he retired to rest, for the usually assiduous Ferukh Pandy was nowhere to be found. Neither were syce nor bheestie (*i.e.*, groom or water-carrier) to be seen, as by preparing supper, if Jack fancied a slice of ham or so forth, they would lose caste, so, as he had no caste to lose, he proceeded to serve himself, and anathematise India as "an infernal hole!"

It was evident that all his servants were absent, without leave. Even the punkah-wallah had levanted; a most singular piece of audacity.

"Very odd, all this!" muttered Jack; "decidedly those fellows are up to something, though one can't exactly say what it is."

Even the howling dervish, Hafiz Falladeen, had disappeared from the gate of the Compound. No trace of him remained, but the hole in which he had wedged his filthy person; but ere long we shall show where he and the worthy valet, Ferukh Pandy, were on the night in question.

"By the Lord Harry! I'll make those darkies dance when they return," said Jack, glancing to where his whips hung, as he stretched himself at full length on a Chinese easy chair; "and now for a glass of brandy-pawnee and soda—or a biscuit and Madeira—no use going to bed, when I'm booked for morning parade in less than two hours."

CHAPTER VIII.

MESS-ROOM OF THE 54TH NATIVE INFANTRY.

WORTHY HARROWER'S mental threats about making "the darkies dance" to the crack of his whip, evaporated in the early morning, when his kitmutgar found him fast asleep in the cane easy chair, with his legs on the table, though the first drum had beaten for parade—a manilla cheroot between his teeth, a cup of cold tea (as a refresher) on one side of him, and on the other a pile of cigar ashes, on an Agra soapstone plate.

"Ugh!" muttered Jack, as he started up, stiff, shivering, and rubbing his eyes and elbows; "such a bore it is, this monotonous round of duty—up at gunfire—present again at parade in full-dress at 4 p.m.; guards, committees, courts, and piquets; men to pay, and hospital to visit; but anything is better than going through the musketry class!"

The long and breathless day, broken chiefly by the afternoon siesta, which is so general and necessary an indulgence all over India, passed slowly away, and Harrower changed his mind a dozen of times as to when he should visit the Westons—whether on that evening or the next; whether he should wait for an invitation, or his visit being returned by the Doctor at the cantonments.

Colonel Ripley's invitation to the 54th mess certainly interfered somewhat with a visit on that evening; and he suddenly remembered, with something like a naughty word on his lips, that he could not go on the following evening either, as he had a set match at billiards to play with Doyle, of the Bengal Fusileers—a match on which some of the 38th and 74th men had laid heavy stakes; and it may be recorded that he won it too, pre-occupied though he was, by scoring more than forty running off the red ball.

The courses of the dinner passed as a dream to Harrower, for, if not with Lena, he would rather have been alone in his own bungalow, for a man in love, especially if he be a disappointed one, is worth little as a companion, and almost less as a member of society; but few or none, save Mellon, would have suspected that such was the state of "jolly Jack Harrower," as he was generally named, and that the goodly row of officers in cool white uniforms, who sat at the long mess-table of the 54th with a turbanned crowd of dusky attendants hovering behind their chairs—every guest brings his own servants in India—bored, rather than amused him, till the cloth was removed, tobacco introduced, and the business of the rather sultry April night began, while white vests were slyly unbuttoned, cigars were lighted, the hookahs

began to bubble under the table, and the great punkah swayed noiselessly to and fro from the ceiling.

A large party was present; Colonel Ripley was in the chair, and there were Mellon, Rivers, Doyle, Captain Douglas, and Willoughby from the palace, and several married officers of the corps, who had been lured from their own domestic circles by the pleasant jollity of the mess-table, and its old remembered associations.

The mysterious distribution of chupatties, or cakes of unleavened bread, was of course duly discussed. It was a sign which many old Scottish and Irish officers of the Indian service correctly interpreted as a signal for war, such symbols having been common enough among the old Celtic clans; but such suggestions only excited the derision of their unthinking English comrades, till the crisis came. Many present were loud and strong—particularly the two foredoomed officers, Douglas and Willoughby—in their belief in the truth and loyalty of their brown sepoys, and in the force and habit of perfect *discipline*. No revolt, they were certain, would stain the ranks of the brigade at Delhi, whatever had happened elsewhere; and these assurances were very pleasant and acceptable to Harrower, and the other Europeans who were present.

It was the birthday of one of the royal princesses, and as her Majesty's subjects are nowhere more loyal, even *à la mort*, than in distant Hindostan, the toast was proposed by the colonel, and drunk with all the honours in every species of liquor, from pink champagne to bitter beer, for such a license is allowed at table, in consequence of the climate, and the different tastes or constitutions of the guests. The band played merrily in the verandah outside; the heat was great; tatts, or wetted mats, were spread over the open windows, for the night actually grew saltry, and the mess chuprassies, or waiters, were kept on the trot with the ice-pails.

There was no theatre, no opera, no parliamentary intelligence to talk about; but there were the local races, shooting, tiger-hunting, pig-sticking, and many a manly adventure to relate. There was a little gossip, too; how Mellon had danced thrice with Miss Kate Weston at the Governor-General's ball, and thus made their engagement quite public, as it is one of the mysteries of Bengal etiquette (or used to be before the P. and O. Line and the railways, too, became so perfect) that a lady never dances more than *once* with the same gentleman in the course of an evening unless they are to be married, a system which must have originated in the great scarcity of European women in the East.

"That is so like the gossip of Calcutta," said Harrower; "society there delights in it."

"So does society in Chatham—eh, Jack? What about the old commandant of the Depôt Battalion?"

Ere Harrower could retort upon Doyle the hidden arrow con-

tained in this speech, the Colonel proposed Kate Weston's health, and so many genuine good wishes were expressed, that Rowley Mellon was put upon his mettle, and had to respond, which he did in somewhat of an affected lisp, tugging the while at his long light whiskers, retaining his eyeglass in his right eye by a contraction of the muscles, and he spoke, not without a certain amount of nervousness, for a score of smiling faces were turned towards him.

"Is it married you're going to be, Mellon?" said Doyle, in his deep, mellow brogue; "isn't it Fielding that says, man is fire and women tow, and the devil sets a light to them"?

This caused a laugh, under cover of which Mellon sat down and drained his glass.

After this the conversation became "shoppy," and the comparative advantages of half and whole batta stations, tentage, &c., were elaborately discussed.

"India's a mighty fine place for a poor man, anyhow," said Pat Doyle, whose deep but very pleasant brogue consorted so well with his huge black whiskers and wild Irish eyes; "mighty fine entirely," he added with infinite gusto, as the third allowance of champagne went round in foaming silver jugs, "it's the best poor man's country under the sun. Bedad! I know many a fellow living here like the son of an Irish king, and enjoying every luxury in life (except coolness) on his pay and allowances, that would starve at home."

"True, in some instances, Mr. Doyle," said Colonel Ripley; "but the country has its drawbacks too. Not the least of these is the fact, as a certain writer says, 'That India is so far off, that no one in England cares a brass farthing about what goes on there, except those pecuniarily interested, and so long as they get their dividends, what do they care?'"

It was not without weariness, almost impatience, that Harrower listened to roars of hearty laughter that burst forth at times, for the smallest of jokes will go a long way at a mess-table, when all are heedless, thoughtless, and resolved to be happy; but these bursts could be heard by some poor fellows who were sick or dying of fever in the adjacent bungalows, and whose places at that merry table would, ere long, be filled by others, for "life in India is but one long fever," and death is never far off; and Jack was bored by the chit-chat and gossip, which at other times would have amused him as the staple of barrack and cantonment conversation; and so dreamy had he become, that Pat Doyle, who sat next him, had quietly taken the snake of the hookah from his hand, and smoked it for half the night, unheeded by him.

Harrower, however, was certainly roused from his unwonted apathy when he heard Captain Douglas informing Mellon, "That Colonel Rudkin, of the Oude Irregulars, as Barrackpore had become unpleasant to him since the domestic tragedy of last month, was to be sent on the staff up country, either to

Allahabad or Delhi—most probably the latter, as the Colonel *wished it.*"

This rumour was gall and wormwood to him, and he took a deep draught of champagne, into which Ferukh Pandy dropped a large piece of ice, and he strove to be a man again, and to join, as was his wont, in the conversation about him; but what mattered it to him, the capital score which Eversly or Willoughby made—no end of a score, indeed!—the best of the Brigade Eleven, and when he carried his bat off the field at the great garrison cricket match, how he had been complimented by Mrs. Patna Rhys and the ladies; how he had been cheered by the sepoys, and what a long face Frank Temple, of the Queen's 32nd, made when bowled out by the first ball, and a big O was put opposite to his name in the report of the match in the *Delhi Gazette.* He smiled, however, when he heard of those things; for with their native games and sports Englishmen carry Old England with them all the world round.

"We ought to have a ball, I think," said a 54th officer, who, believing himself to be musical, had always charge of the band.

"Yes, do by all means," shouted Dicky Rivers from the foot of the table; "and invite the Westons and their friends, the new Scotch arrivals."

"Who are they?" drawled Horace Eversly of the 54th, a fair-haired, long-legged, and solemn-looking dandy, whom Mellon always designated "a vain snob," and who had scarcely spoken all night. He was one of those young men who feel it a bore to think and a greater bore to speak. He wore his hair accurately divided in the centre and down the back of his head, and looked like a bust in a hair-dresser's window. He seemed one of those poor, lifeless, un-impressionable creatures, two or three of whom are to be found in every regiment; who never smile, to whom everything comes as a matter of course, and who live in a sublime and self-conceited calm that nothing can disturb. Yet he showed courage when the time for it came. "They are girls come, no doubt, to seek for husbands on this side of the equator—about Chowringee, or up country—eh?" he suggested.

"You're wrong entirely," said Doyle, bluntly and even sharply. "Those Leslies are worth looking after—not perhaps that they'd care much for such a very fine fellow as you, Eversly; but their uncle, the Judge, can give them two lacs of rupees apiece, in Bank of Bengal shares, and the Great Indian Peninsular Line, too."

"Twenty thousand pounds each!" exclaimed Frank Temple, the lieutenant of Harrower's company; "though I don't care about going cheap——"

"You've a mind to enter for one yourself," interrupted Doyle;

"It is very kind of you, Temple. You might go farther and fare worse, my boy. They are very nice looking——"

"By candle-light; and horridly vain they'll be about themselves or their friends—all Scotch girls are," added Eversly.

"How low they wore their book-muslins," said Rivers. "I never saw such a display—did you, Doyle?"

"Bedad, not since I was weaned for certain," was the reply, which raised a little laugh.

"Their shoulders were snowy white, at all events. You can't deny that, Pat Doyle."

"Save for a trifle of the prickly heat, Dickey. What an observant boy you are!"

"The prickly heat will soon pass away," said Rivers, assuming his cloak and cap to share Willoughby's buggy into Delhi. "Good night—we'll all turn up on the course, some time to-morrow, I suppose."

"Eh—aw—is that the little griff, who is so spooney upon young Polly Weston?" drawled Eversly, to the few, who at that late hour, were lingering together at the end of the table.

"Faith, older men than Dicky Rivers might be so," said Doyle, "for she is lovely—downright lovely, and in her soft English beauty seems a perfect miracle in this land of leather-skinned, black and slimy Hindoos."

"Rouse yourself, Jack Harrower," said Mellon; "we wish you to tell us that Chatham story, of which we have all heard so many different versions."

"Then, Rowley, like the knife-grinder—you'll find that, by Jove—I've none to tell."

"Not so—you have a personal adventure, a legend of the service—of the Indian service too; so as there are only a select few remaining, hear it we must."

"Story about what?"

"The scrape you fell into with pretty Mrs. Woodby, and the old commandant of the Indian Depôt Battalion."

"We all have a grudge at him. He twice sent the adjutant for Temple's sword, alleging that he made shindies in his room at night; and he once had me, Pat Doyle, before a general court-martial, for drawing what he called a caricature of him in the Regimental Order Book; so we are all ready to believe the worst of him and the best of you. So fire away, or, by the trout of Kilgavower, we'll have Mellon singing 'The Bengal Fusileers,' a ditty that always comes off about this hour in the morning."

"The married fogies are all gone," said Mellon, "and here are only six of us remaining; yourself, Doyle, Eversly, Douglas, Temple, and I."

"Agreed then!—here Chuprassy, fill our glasses with some-

thing—anything that comes to hand. Pass the cigar-box, Doyle—and here goes for the story," said Harrower, with forced cheerfulness, and a good-natured desire to please his friends, combined with a wish to pass the time in any fashion.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GARRISON FLIRT.

YOU ask me to give you a story, when really I have none to tell that will interest you, I fear. Any one may make up a play, but it is another thing to produce an audience; so any one may write a book, but it is another affair to find readers.

"Well, in the year before I first embarked for India, it was my evil fortune to be attached to the depôt of my corps—some sixty rank and file—then with one of the depôt battalions under Colonel Woodby, in Chatham, that great military school, though some give it a harder and certainly a hotter name.

"A raw sub, I had only left Eton some two years or so before, and was summarily sent by the adjutant and sergeant-major to all kinds of drill—to club, sword, manual, and platoon exercises, to setting up, facing and marching, twice daily, till my life grew weary, and I abhorred the gravelled barrack-yard, the Spur-battery, and even the green Lines that stretch towards Gillingham—but all that sort of thing you know as well as I—till I was reported fit for duty, and had the honour of commanding a guard over a string of sulky convicts in the dockyard.

"I was often in scrapes, I admit. Colonel Woodby was a tight hand, but after a time he got tired of 'rowing me,' and sending the adjutant for my sword. Thus, I could almost do as I pleased in or out of barracks—at least so Temple and others of our men were wont to say.

"Old Woodby was a dreadful bugbear and bullying *behaudar* to all in general, but to ensigns in particular. He had a natural antipathy to officers of that distinguished rank in the service. He was stunted in figure, was almost destitute of neck, had a round bilious-looking face, with two fierce, twinkling little eyes, and was every way the best specimen of the old curry-eating, rupee-collecting, yellow-visaged, hubble-bubble, smoking Anglo-Indian tyrant I ever met. He hated Europe naturally and all connected with it. He had a terrible reputation when up country here; but when he came to Calcutta, *en route* for Europe, on the sick list, he set his zenana of Hindoo girls adrift, and returned to England a sternly moral character; and though he was yellow as a new guinea, and had a liver as large as his purse, he married a girl of great beauty, who was only a third of his age, and settled

down comfortably on the staff as the commandant of a depôt battalion.

"However, even one who was not an enthusiastic admirer of the service must have admitted that the sight of old Woodby—Bluebeard, we called him—in full war-paint, on a black kicking brute of a horse, that spent half its time on its hind legs, was certainly impressive, when he and his unwearied adjutant scampered from wing to wing on a field day, and raved at all and sundry; or when in a fit of ill-temper he backed his horse among the people, making it curvet, prance, paw the air, swerve round, and do everything but stand on its head. Hoarse in voice, red in face, furious in temper, and the wonder of all; with dogs barking and women screaming about him, old Woodby was in his glory at an inspection on the Lines.

"Well, his wife was the reverse of all this, a young, and wonderfully pretty woman, with a brilliant complexion, bright brown hair, laughing brown eyes, lashes that were black, and an expression of winning sweetness that few could withstand. How such an ill-assorted pair came to be united in the holy bonds of matrimony, no one knew; but united they were, and there was—no, not quite an end of it, for the Colonel was by nature constitutionally jealous of her, without any solid reason, till he at length caused it, and was normally in as furious a state of mind as Othello, after Desdemona lost the handkerchief.

"If any unfortunate fellow was too attentive overnight in dancing with pretty Mrs. Woodby, in procuring ices for her, seeing her through the crush of the supper-room, in daring to place the cashmere shawl, or the opera cloak, over her smooth white shoulders with too much care, as he led her to the carriage, he was pretty sure to catch it next day in some fashion, and if he belonged to the Depôt Battalion, might be thankful if he was not sent to practise the goose-step in Brompton barrack-yard, or banished on detachment to Tilbury Fort.

"The Colonel hated balls and parties, but was compelled to attend them for the express purpose of watching his wife, when he would rather have been dozing at his club, or having a quiet rubber with the Inspector of Hospitals, the Superintendent of the Dock-yard, or some other big-wig whose rank he deemed nearly equal to his own.

"The result of all this system was to make the lady an accomplished and scientific flirt.

"She was never known to go down to supper with the man whom she really had designs upon, or with whom she intended to 'get up' an affair; but that individual (paired off with some plain old woman by her arrangement) was sure to be seated on her left side, 'to be nearer her heart,' as she would whisper in so winning a way, that he was sure to believe her, as a dozen had done so before.

"It was a standing order of the Colonel that she should never

waltz, though she could do so to perfection; and she never did waltz when he was present, but so soon as it was correctly ascertained that the Colonel was set down to an interminable game of whist, or having a glass of grog with some other old fogie, she was whirling away, with sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks, her white dress sweeping like a maze around her swift and beautiful feet, in the grasp of Green of the Rifles, Kydds of the Cavalry, or some other envied man, pausing only to droop, cast down her long lashes, to lean and sigh, and flirt furiously, while talking of platonic love, with mysterious sentimentality.

"A highly-finished coquette now, all her thoughts were centered on conquests and flirtations, which she was pleased to term platonic friendships; and in these laudable pursuits she sacrificed her time, her health by late hours, and the temper—such as it was—of her fiery spouse.

"Some fellows there were, who asserted that she had concocted a regular code of private signals, whereby, from the draping of the drawing-room curtains, or the arrangement of the dining-room blinds, it could be known to the initiated whether Bluebeard was at home, or absent on duty.

"Captain Jollie Green of the Rifles, and Cornet Sir Lavender Kydds, of the Queen's own Hussars, and many more, had got into scrapes with her; now, as the spirit of mischief would have it, *my* turn came.

"I was in all the confidence and vanity that could be inspired by my first red coat, and its bullion epaulettes (those splendid badges of which we should *never* have been deprived), when I met her at the weekly Rochester balls, and at those given by the Commandant, the Inspector of Hospitals, the head of the dock-yard at Chatham, and all the grandees of that remarkable place. I found her the cynosure of all eyes, and so closely beset by partners—her cards being usually filled up three deep a day before—that I could never approach her, or even catch one glance of her beautiful brown eyes.

"I had once come upon her suddenly, when, with Captain Green in attendance, she was sketching the ruins of Rochester Castle, and that fine old bridge of the days of King John, which I can still see in fancy, with its quaint eleven arches that span the rushing Medway, great tufts of brown sea-ware waving in the wind upon its buttresses, like the masses of green ivy that tremble in the gaping windows of the great old Norman keep, which for seven centuries has watched the passage of the river.

"She looked up from her sketch, and smiled at me. It was doubtless only because she saw a boy—shall I say a very passable looking boy—in uniform; it was a smile more motherly than coquettish, yet I interpreted it in my own fashion, and went home to evening parade, blushing furiously with excitement, and con-

fided to Frank Temple that I was likely to become the rival of Bluebeard at last!

"I felt a little crushed next day, when she passed me in the Vines—the walk near the old Cathedral—without the slightest glance; but then that horrid fellow Kydds and no less than three artillery officers were with her.

"On one occasion I sat in her pew in the Cathedral; the beadle ushered me in because there was a vacant seat, and the Colonel gave me one of those scowls with which he generally favoured ensigns. He had often regarded me thus, so I was used to it; and I sat close beside *her*, with a beating heart, and scarcely daring to look at her, while the service lasted.

"Her long, dark lashes, that fell over the smoothly-rounded, and softly-delicate cheek, were never raised, like her bright hazel eyes, from her book, save to gaze on the clergyman's face, and Ensign Harrower she heeded no more than the grim visage that was carved on the Norman pillar overhead.

"One day—ah, I shall never forget it—I had the good fortune to catch her horse on the Lines, near Gillingham, when it had become restive, and got the bit between its teeth, so that she had lost all control over it. Still we were never introduced; our acquaintance was merely one of casual glancing, and though she knew me as well as the big drum, or the vane on the barrack roof, which represents a rifleman firing, she did not—in my vanity I flattered myself that she *dared* not acknowledge me, as I had ever the reputation of being a desperate flirt in a small way, among the pretty Jewesses who keep the cigar and perfumery shops in the High Street and Hammond Place, and who fleece and smile the young subs out of their loose change.

"In the evening after the episode on the Lines, I found myself returning to my quarters, on the Terrace, in a very enviable state of satisfaction, and full of the conviction, that now I must be on the footing of an acquaintance—a friend—with the beautiful coquette—the garrison flirt, who had turned the heads of all the community, and whose influence and reputation extended among the Cavalry, even to Maidstone and Canterbury.

"Entering my room—my rank entitled me to only *one*—I found Frank Temple, who generally chummed with me in barracks—you remember, don't you, Frank?—seated on the table, with a visiting card in his hand.

"It was highly enamelled, and bore a crest and coat of arms, with the address, 'Mrs. Woodby, Medway Villa, Rochester.'

"'Whew!' whistled Frank, 'here's a queer affair! Jack, my fine fellow, the Colonel's wife has been here—actually *here* in your quarters!'

"'Impossible!' said I, blushing deeply.

"'There is nothing physically impossible in it, whatever there may be morally.'

"'It is some trick—a trick of yours, perhaps,' I exclaimed.

"'It is no trick,' said Temple, impetuously: 'I give you my word of honour, Harrower, that I found it lying on the table; and these are old Woodby's crest and coat of arms. Thundering snobbery to have them on one's pasteboard—isn't it?'

"'What are they?'

"'Heaven and the Herald's College only know—crest, a *lusus naturæ* proper—supporters, two female figures, only half-draped—decidedly improper.'

"'Stop this joking, Frank, and tell me where you really did find it.'

"'Lying on the table beside this book—did she leave *it*, too?'

"'No—I sent my man, Phil Ryder, to the garrison library for it, after parade this morning.'

"'Rum title—what the deuce is it all about?'

"'Plot taken from the Newgate Calendar, I should think,' said I, laughing.

"It was the last new 'sensation' novel, entitled, 'The Seven Deadly Sins, and How I Committed Them,' by one of the most distinguished light-literary ladies of the day, a production in which the heroine, a fair Belgravian, got herself hopelessly entangled in breaches of most of the commandments, together with a little bigamy.

"I now mentioned the adventure on the Lines.

"'Take care, Jack,' said Temple, seriously, 'or you'll have an affair with Mrs. Woodby.'

"'It seems as easy as cribbage now!' I replied, jauntily, and feeling somewhat elated.

"'These things never end well,' said Frank, sententiously.

"'It is very odd that she should have called on *me*——'

"'Not at all, if you saved her life on the Lines, as you say you did, Jack.'

"'But she has called here before that interesting event.'

"'True—it beats cock-fighting!'

"'But, for heaven's sake, don't mention it to any one!'

"I pledged Frank to secresy, and rang for my servant, Phil Ryder, to ask him if anybody had been at my quarters that day; but I rang in vain. Mr. Ryder was three days absent on a tipsy 'spree,' so I could learn nothing from him about it. The sentry posted near the door had not seen anybody near the place, and grinned at my question, as you may well suppose.

"Though very much puzzled as to why the Colonel's wife should visit *me*, and very improperly elated thereby, I resolved to visit *her*, without delay, on the morrow, all the more readily and confidently that I knew from the garrison Order Book that our ferocious old Commandant was detailed for a district court martial at Woolwich, and would be absent at least until the evening.

"So for some hours the coast would be clear—the fair position open to attack.

"Now, not to keep you behind the scenes, and as I hate all mystery, I may as well inform you of what afterwards transpired. It seems that Mrs. Woodby had been perusing the same identical sensational story, in three volumes, post octavo, which Phil Ryder had brought from the library, and that she had inadvertently left between the leaves one of her calling cards, which she had, naturally enough, been using as a marker.

"The card had fallen out, and my worthy Fidus Achates, without a word of explanation, had laid it on the table, where Frank Temple found it.

"Ignorant of all this, and in great anxiety to present myself to one, of whom I doubted not my fine appearance and the gay uniform of the Cornish Light Infantry had made a conquest, when morning parade was over I thought the afternoon would never arrive, so slowly did the time seem to pass.

"I then made a very careful toilet, and ere long found myself at Medway Villa, Rochester, after framing in fancy a hundred pretty speeches and amiable responses from her.

"'Is Colonel Woodby at home?' I inquired, with the most perfect air of simplicity.

"'Colonel's gone to Woolwich, on dooty, sir,' replied the orderly—one of my own men, by the way—who opened the door; 'but Mrs. Woodby is at 'ome.'

"'Take up my card, please.'

"He saluted me, wheeled round, as if his heels were on a well-oiled pivot, and marched upstairs before me to the door of a very pretty little drawing-room, into which I was ushered; and where I found myself among muslin curtains, marble tables, and glass-shades—alone.

"I felt that there was a little awkwardness in the whole affair, and that perfect confidence only would carry me through it.

"She, however, had begun the matter; else, wherefore her card?

"From the windows I could see the bright blue Medway, winding down between green and sloping uplands to the old bridge that connected Rochester and Stroud; the keep of the castle, which so closely resembles the White Tower of London; the spire of the Cathedral; the oyster and fisher-boats in the creek of the river, and high over all, half hidden in the sunny haze, on the green and grassy hill beyond, Fort Clarence, the abode of the insane, where, if old Woodby returned and found me *here*, I thought would be the safest place for me.

"There was the sound of a soft voice, the rustle of a perfumed silk dress, and I found myself before the dazzling Mrs. Woodby, who was fully six years my senior, and whose sudden appearance put to flight all the fine speeches I had been so elaborately preparing. In her clear, laughing eyes, there was an expression of

droll curiosity, that caused my embarrassment rapidly to become confusion, all the more that she made not the slightest reference to her visit, and the circumstance of leaving her card for me.

"'You—you were at the barracks, I think, yesterday, Mrs. Woodby?' said I, resolved to take the initiative, as we seated ourselves on the same sofa.

"'No—I have not been near the barracks for more than a week,' she replied.

"'For more than a week!' said I, aghast.

"'At least not nearer than the Lines, and I have again to thank you for so opportunely assisting me then—you are, I think, the same gentleman.'

"I was sorely confounded! so she had not visited me after all—or was she only acting? Yes, it must be so; the pretty rogue was only acting; so I shall act too, thought I, and say nothing as yet about the card.

"Of yesterday's episode I might have taken legitimate advantage as a reason for calling to inquire after her health, but I was too young in such matters to see that.

"'You have called to see Colonel Woodby—on duty, no doubt; I am sorry that he is from home—gone to Woolwich by the rail last night. When do you expect the route—the order to embark for India?' she asked, with one of her softest smiles.

"'I don't know,' stammered I; 'but I thought that—that—the Colonel might be able to tell me something about it.'

"'Oh, be assured that it will come quite soon enough for you; and then think what a change! to be cooped up for so many months in a crowded transport; to have to weather the Cape and the storms in the Bay of Bengal, after the gaieties of Chatham, the balls, the parties, the mess, the select dinners, cricket on the lines, regattas on the river, the pretty partners at croquet on the lawn, and everywhere extremely safe but limited flirtation—limited, as the business advertisements say. Sad to have to forego all that, eh?'

"'I don't flirt,' said I, demurely.

"'Why, Mr.—Mr.——'

"'Harrower,' I suggested.

"'True—I dropped your card.'

"'I don't know why—that is, somehow I'm always in earnest.'

"She burst into a merry fit of ringing laughter, while I must admit that I was bold enough to attempt, but in vain, to open a pedal communication with the pretty foot that was so near mine, for Mrs. Woodby carried off her *espièglerie* with uncommon *éclat*, and could say the strangest things in the world without exciting the horror of any one but the Colonel; but she was so beautiful and so clever, that people could pardon anything in her.

"'So you don't know how?' she resumed; 'then I must give you a few lessons: but meanwhile you must study some pretty

speeches, and loving glances, with compliments culled from novels. Study particularly the part of Romeo,' she added, laying her hand on mine, and sending a perilous thrill to my heart.

"'And now, Mrs. Woodby, evening parade draws near, and I —I must really go,' said I, for my visit had been greatly protracted by many long and awkward pauses in the conversation, for the woman's brilliant manner, her winning ways, her wonderful power of eye, and her positive love-making, were very bewildering to a mere lad; and so thoroughly was flirtation constitutional to her, that she could not resist the temptation of doing a little even with me, a raw ensign in his teens.

"'Go, then,' said she, still smiling as she kept her soft little hand on mine, and rose with a tragi-comic air, 'and remember what Juliet said to Romeo in the theatre—I saw *you* there at Rochester last night—

> "I would have thee gone,
> And yet no farther than a wanton's bird,
> That lets it hop a little from her hand,
> Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves,
> And with a silk thread pulls it back again,
> So jealous-loving of his liberty."

"'By Jove! she *must* have left the card, after all,' thought I, as she held out a lovely hand to me; stooping, I kissed it, with a blushing cheek and hotly beating heart, and when I raised my head — oh, horror, I saw the short stunted figure of Colonel Woodby cased up in his blue frogged surtout, belted, with sash and sabre, and with his fat fierce visage empurpled by indignation to a dangerous extent.

"The lady was tolerably well used to that sort of thing; she was perfectly cool, and by no means put out, but I felt myself grow pale when confronted by this 'new Gorgon.'

"'Mr. Harrower, of the Cornish Light Infantry,' said she, presenting me with a well-bred smile.

"'I have the misfortune to know the young gentleman,' said the Colonel, coldly and huskily; 'I thank him for his visit, but must not detain him from parade'—(looking at his watch)—'in a quarter of an hour the men will fall in, sir.'

"'By all that's beautiful, I am in a desperate scrape,' thought I, as with a mind a little perplexed, I made my way in a cab back to the barracks at a tearing pace, just in time to save my credit with the adjutant; and meanwhile a strange little scene was being enacted by the loving couple I had left behind me.

"'You have returned very suddenly, my dear,' said Mrs. Woodby, while smoothing her hair in a mirror, which enabled her to observe the Colonel.

"'Suddenly—yes, and unexpectedly, too, madam!' said he, fiercely.

"'You behaved very coldly—even rudely, to our visitor; I thought the young man was a friend of yours, Colonel.'

"'Friend of mine—why?'

"'Otherwise he would not have called.'

"'I thought the d—d jackanapes was some friend of *yours*, madam, otherwise he would not have dared to call.'

"'Dared?'

"'Yes, dared, when the garrison orders must duly have informed him that I was to be absent. Yes, madam, *absent*, in Woolwich to-day. This is all trickery, madam,—foul trickery!' he shouted, as the long pent-up wrath and jealousy burst in perspiration from every feature of his face, which was now turned from its normal colour of yellow to a flaming red. 'Madam, every day gives me further proof of how your heart has wandered from me.'

"'It is false, Colonel Woodby; but if it had, do you think that studied tyranny, mean suspicions, keen invective, fiery accusations, and furious reproaches would ever recall it?'

"What an actress that woman would have made! But knowing that she was perfectly innocent in this instance, at least, my friend Willoughby, who, awkwardly enough, heard all this scene as he waited in the outer drawing-room, said that she gave the Colonel, from her flashing brown eyes, such a glance as Jael might have had in her black orbs when she swung her vengeful hammer over the head of Sisera, and swept away.

"Another minute saw the irate Colonel—heedless of his new visitor—mounted on his black charger, and galloping after me to the barracks, where he came straight to my quarters, making a mighty clatter as he ascended the wooden stairs with his heavy boots, spurs, and brass scabbard.

"'Mr. Harrower,' said he, with great impressiveness of manner, 'will you inform me, sir, how you dared to violate the privacy of my family—to visit my house in my absence, and unintroduced, sir—unintroduced?'

At that moment, and before I could form an answer, his fiery eyes fell on his wife's card, which my rascal of a servant had placed in a conspicuous place on my mantelpiece. Phil Ryder was as faithful to me as Strap was to Roderick Random, as Friday to Robinson Crusoe, and yet his blunders were likely to cost me dear.

"With a shout of rage more like the cry of a wild animal than the voice of a man, the Colonel snatched it from the mantelpiece and hurried away to confront her with this damning proof of her having visited me, and there was an awful row at Medway Villa, you may be assured.

"He determined to have me brought to book in the matter. All that night and all the next day he read up Tytler and Simmons on 'Courts Martial;' he strove hard to twist the 17th, 80th, and 108th article of the second section of the *Mu-*

tiny Act, concerning offences and insults—conduct unbecoming an officer, or prejudicial to military discipline—especially that delightfully vague clause about 'crimes not specified,' to suit my case; and it was the India House to a China orange that he didn't contrive to smash me, and all through that unlucky piece of pasteboard. But the route came for India—we embarked on a three hours' notice, and next week saw us off the Buoy at the Nore."

* * * * * * *

By the time Harrower's story was finished, it was found that Doyle had fallen asleep, and set his black bushy whiskers on fire with a short cigar; that the punkah-drivers had gone to sleep too; and the chuprasseys had gone, weary of waiting on sahibs who seemed disposed to turn night into day.

"Now, gentlemen," said a 54th officer, "there are billiards and sangaree (negus) for those who choose; the table is in the next room."

"Not for me—thanks," said Harrower; I am too weary to handle a cue to-night; besides, a billiard table is sure to be crowded about by civilians, who can talk of nothing but indigo and opium—tanks and rum—rain and irrigation, and these are a general style of 'shop,' beyond me."

"Wine then?"

"Not another glass—I've no wish to figure in the sick list to-morrow, though we cool our wine with ice now, and I can remember when we were thankful to do so with saltpetre. Ice in India—American ice too—ye gods! when will wonders cease?"

Bright and high shone the clear and silver moon over the far stretching streets of dusky brown huts, in the spacious cantonments, as Harrower and Doyle made their way to their different bungalows, the space between the compounds being scarcely broad enough for the dubious progress of the Bengal Fusileer, who kept repeating again and again that he was sure "the mess champagne of the 54th had a curious tendency to go into the heels of one's boots."

CHAPTER X.

THE SKETCH OF THORPE AUDLEY.

WHEN looking about his quarters next morning, while dressing for parade, with his eyes half closed by sleep, Harrower's energies were fully roused when he discovered two cards, which Ferukh Pandy said had been left last evening at the gate of the compound.

They were those of Dr. Weston and Polly, who had passed

through the cantonments in the carriage, almost immediately after he had gone to the mess of the 54th.

"Bravo!" thought he; "this is certainly encouraging—so speedy a return of my visit. God bless the kind old Doctor, and dear little Polly!"

But it was more encouraging still when he found himself invited to dinner, by a pencilled memorandum on the back of Dr. Weston's card, naming the third day ensuing!

All this, it may easily be believed, made Harrower very happy, and put to flight his first morning reflections. These, after such a night of wine, tobacco, and talking as he had spent in the mess-bungalow, had not been pleasant. Though the ostensible hero of this story, Harrower had, like other heroes, been a boy, and was not above having human weaknesses; but he felt assured that he had talked too much, and said many things that had been better left unsaid; that he had acted ungenerously in holding the pretty Mrs. Woodby up to ridicule, for the mere amusement of a few heedless fellows like Doyle, Eversly, Temple, and so forth; yet it was some consolation to remember that she was as well known in the Queen's Service as the clock of the Horse Guards, or the vane of Chatham Barracks.

The cards set to flight all thoughts but of the Westons, and he resolved to accept the invitation in person, and to visit Delhi the moment parade was over.

He now hoped to achieve great things with Lena, when presenting her with the long-treasured sketch of Thorpe Audley, that place with which they had so many associations in common—memories which could never be forgotten.

"It was there, under that old arch, I first avowed my love for Lena, Mellon, and there she accepted me," he had once said to his friend; "how fleeting was the joy!"

"True," replied the matter-of-fact Rowley; "there is a novel which says, 'The first kiss of love is very pleasant no doubt, but it is a transient gratification; you can't carry it away with you and show it to your friends in the country.' It is fleeting after all."

Harrower looked at the sketch again and again, and touched it up anew with his pencil, the arch of the Lichgate and its masses of ivy—the stile that lay beyond—the square tower and the porch of the old village church, with the chimneys of the village itself, peeping up among the woodlands in the distance. Every chimney there Lena would remember, and might recal its household, their faces, and all their little histories.

How fortunate it was that he had fondly preserved this little relic of those happy days, which he hoped it would bring back to her memory, in all their strength and purity.

The casual rumour which he had overheard last night concerning Mark Rudkin's probable transference to Delhi, or even to Allahabad, though that station was more than three hundred miles

distant, haunted him constantly. A meeting between them might certainly lessen his power over Lena, if power he had, and so destroy his new found hopes or chances, such as they were.

Forgetting time and place, and thinking only of the girl he loved, impatient Jack Harrower rode into Delhi at noon, a time when no one visits in India, as that is the period of siesta, when, as a traveller has it, "ladies rarely do anything but lie down in their dressing-gowns, scold their ayahs, and powder their necks and faces."

So he arrived at Dr. Weston's mansion merely to be told by the durwan with folded hands and bowed head, while *no* gong was sounded, that "the gates were closed," which is polite Hindostani for saying that "no one is at home;" and with the conviction that he had made a mistake, he had to ride back to the cantonments, under a burning sun, courting the chances of brain-fever, or a *coup de soleil*, having not even a *chattah*, or umbrella, over him, as he was mounted; and so he reached his quarters with his sketch unpresented, and cast himself into an easy chair, in a worry of heat, disappointment, and annoyance.

The dinner day—he counted every hour of the intervening time—came at last, and he presented his sketch to Lena in all due form, not as he had fondly hoped, when they would be alone, but unluckily in the presence of many.

The *date*, pencilled in a corner, might have recalled some important things to her memory. Whether or not it did so was not discernible in her manner, of which she had the most perfect control. She looked at the drawing with well-bred interest, remarked its several features, praised it very much, thanked him earnestly, and retired to deposit it in her own room, leaving her sister Kate for a time to receive their guests, whom Harrower was disappointed to find (notwithstanding his unceremonious invitation) were likely to be numerous, for he would rather have found himself in the Doctor's family circle alone.

On the large white marble drawing-room table, which was supported by an enormous mahogany pedestal, among many other things, lay Polly Weston's album, in which she now insisted he should instantly write something, no matter what, were it only his name, among the faded photographs, Chinese rice-paper paintings, and Indian landscapes, or snow scenes done on grey cardboard with flake white and black lead, and presented to Polly by more than half the subs and cadets of Delhi.

Therein, with some amusement, he found that Dicky Rivers had transferred the lines from Croly's "Angel of the World," beginning—

"How glorious are thy mountains, proud Bengal!"

appending at the foot thereof his own august autograph—"Richard Rivers, 6th B. N. I. Original verses."

"Mr. Doyle," said Lena, "you will lead in Miss Flora Leslie to dinner."

"A twenty thousand pounder," whispered Mellon; "go in and win at a canter, Pat."

"'With all my worldly goods I thee endow.' Could I say that to the girl, when all I have in this dirty world is a couple of old bullock trunks, a red coat for guard, another for dress, and a couple of regulation swords or so? Oh Lord, wouldn't it be a mighty big swindle?" laughed poor Pat Morris Doyle, "barrin' the whiskers and the laste taste of the brogue."

"You are just the man—the fair Flora has money enough for two."

When, after the gong had thundered in the vestibule, they all solemnly marched in file (as Dicky whispered to Polly, "like the beasts going into the ark"), towards the drawing-room, Harrower found himself paired off with old Mrs. Patna Rhys, whose staple conversation consisted of ayahs and babies, while Lena "brought up the rear" of the procession with the Brigadier commanding the station.

Between the massive silver pedestals of the candelabra, the great central epergne of flowers and fruit, and a line of beautiful china and alabaster vases of flowers that stood along the centre of the table, he could only get a glimpse of her at times; so the dinner passed off, and the subsequent hours in the drawing-room, without an opportunity being accorded him of barely doing more than address the most simple common-place to Lena; so the occasion for which he had longed, and from which he had hoped so much might accrue, passed away without avail; the sketch had been given and received; nothing had come thereof, and nothing might ever come; and that night saw Harrower lingering in his bungalow ere he retired to rest, and thinking, that but for the threatening state of affairs in India, he would endeavour to quit the country and go home to Europe, on a medical certificate, if he could get it.

He visited the Westons at stated intervals now, frequently choosing the cool early mornings, when he knew the girls rode abroad, and while the worthy Doctor was busy with evangelical matters, conferring with regimental divines, Mr. Jennings, the chaplain of the station, Scripture readers, schoolmasters, and so forth; but Polly was always by, little Willie was in the way, or something transpired through which, by a singular fatality, he could never see Lena alone.

Certainly she avoided him, or contrived matters to be thus, yet she managed it with the most wonderful delicacy and tact, so that he, honest fellow, never suspected her, but continued sedulously to hope, and to watch for his opportunity. How well he could remember the time when opportunities had never been wanting! When they had often been alone—alone amid a crowd

—when her hand in his hand, her arm leaning on his arm, and pressed against his side, were conversation enough.

Would such a time ever come again?

Then he would remember that in India doors and windows are always open everywhere; that swarms of servants, with their quick black eyes and suspicious hearts, were always hovering about; that the everlasting punkah-wallah was always on the alert, and that the opportunities for love-making were fewer than in Europe—fewer, indeed, than among the green shady lanes of Thorpe Audley.

He knew that she had much to attend to, for she was now the mistress of a large Indian household, consisting of many copper-coloured ayahs, in scarlet and white robes, and many darker men-servants in turbans and cummerbunds, who were maintained, however, on little, as they slept on mats, on the stairs, in the verandah, or anywhere, and lived chiefly on a little rice; but then every servant seemed to have a servant or two of his own, who did for him all the work that he could delegate unknown to "Missy Lena, the mem sahib;" and all this cumbrous establishment, together with the ostentatious style adopted by Europeans in India, formed a vast change after the quiet little Rectory House at home, with only the poor and the parochial children to oversee.

India did not seem to agree with Lena. She was beautiful still, but extremely pale, and there were times—perhaps of weariness, when Jack thought with sorrow, that she was growing almost—shall we say it?—*passée*—yet he loved her not the less. *Passée* at five-and-twenty!

At the dinner party she had looked charming, in pure white, with strings of fine pearls in her dark hair, and the Champac ornaments of yellow gold filigree work, sent her by the Delhi princes.

Dicky Rivers, in a boyish spirit of mischief, often tormented his cousin about Harrower, as Kate informed the latter, who felt grateful to the little Ensign, but when contrasting his five feet eleven inches with the boy's under-stature, he could not help laughing, for Dick's plea that he "felt himself bound to assist the views of a brother officer."

Harrower was not a successful lover, hence he was full of wild and tormenting fears and suspicions, that were the very fathers of the thoughts which in his cooler and more reasoning moments he thrust aside as ungenerous and absurd. Among other things, there were times when he trembled with anger, lest Rudkin might have written to Lena already; but then he knew she would disdain to answer him—or hoped that she would not do so; but he dreaded most a second exertion of that power and influence which had been so fatal to them both once before. Moreover, he had nearly lost confidence in himself, and often cursed

the hour that had sent him up the Jumna, on detachment to Delhi.

Each day that he resolved to bring matters to a final end with Lena, visitors, or some fortuitous circumstance, would mar the interview, and he had decided not to trust to writing. One day it was a snake which had been found coiled up under Kate's bed, and all the household were in a state of excitement, hunting it from place to place, and beating it with stieks and bamboos, till it was fairly killed at last.

Another day duty would interfere; he would be for guard, or piquet, for patrol, or a court martial for the trial of some refractory Sepoy, or it arose from the arrival or departure of letters by Calcutta for the overland mail; and then Harrower would sigh, for save very distant relations of whom he seldom or never heard, his friends in England were all dead. The railway was now superseding the dawk-boat which bore the mail once; but the dawk-wallah, or postman, with his bags, was no source of excitement to him now, for they brought him nothing but perhaps a letter from some old chum or brother officer down the country at Allahabad, Barrackpore, or Calcutta, or from some forgotten creditor in the latter city of palaces. Yet Jack could remember the gush of salt tears through which he read his mother's first letter in the camp before we fought the battle of Ferozeshah.

Save his friends of the regimental mess, all his hopes and ideas were centred in the Westons now.

"Time has passed on, Rowley," said he to Mellon; "and though not a daily visitor at the house of the Westons, I am, as you know, always a welcome one."

"I am sure of that, Jack."

"I ride with the girls or beside their carriage on the course; am with them at the promenades by the band-stand and when shopping in the bazaar, or in Chandney Choke; but Lena, who knows my secret and divines my purpose, has studiously never permitted it to come about that we are left together for a moment, so, Rowley, you see, it is time wasted with me."

"Have patience, old fellow."

"She will never give me an opportunity of speaking on the subject nearest my heart. Free as she is, why should this system be, unless—unless it is because that man too is free?"

"Hope for the best, my dear fellow," urged Mellon; "such a steady regard as yours merits a good reward."

"Yes, Mellon, and hope I shall. I have, I think, a trust, a confidence, that will enable me to endure as much, perhaps, as I have already endured. Such a girl as Lena is not to be lightly won, I suppose. I do not know—I never loved any other. I can but hope and wait—wait and work on."

A pair of worsted slippers, beautifully worked, were sent to him as "a present from Polly;" but on thanking that lively and golden-haired little Hebe, she vehemently protested that she

had done no more "than embroider one tiny little flower on each; the rest—the whole, indeed—had been done by Lena and Lena only, who had been at work on them ever since he had paid his first visit."

Lena seemed very much provoked by this assertion of Polly's, and contrived to keep still more out of Harrower's way. Thus he paid three entire visits without seeing her.

"Don't mind that, Jack," said Mellon; "'womau's a changeful and a various thing;' and this present of the slippers is very encouraging, at all events."

"It was, perhaps, only a polite return for the pencil sketch, which, I suppose, she has, ere now, tossed into some drawer and forgotten," grumbled Harrower.

"A little time will show what she means."

"For three visits I have not seen her," replied the other, who was seriously in a pet; "I am a great muff, I fear, and wish the General would send me back to head-quarters out of this stupid Delhi."

"We are to have a scamper on horseback round the city, and through the silver square to-morrow evening," said Mellon; "come with us."

"For what end?"

"I'll contrive that you and Lena shall pair off together, or the deuce is in it. I'll tiff with you early, and we'll ride from the cantonments together."

"Thanks, old fellow—you're very kind," sighed Harrower, who was seldom two days—perhaps two hours—in the same mood of mind now.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LOST CHANCE.

WHEN Harrower and Mellon arrived at Dr. Weston's on the following evening and dismounted at the gate, they found Dicky Rivers, and Polly in her riding-habit, seated under the verandah, shooting with the *goolale*, a species of Indian bow, which propelled balls of sun-dried clay with considerable accuracy, and they were now using them, greatly to the annoyance of the huge, solemn adjutant-birds on the terrace and garden wall, but they ceased this occupation, less on the appearance of their friends, than of a kind of funeral procession that now approached them between the gorgeous parterres of the Indian garden.

This was little Willie, his eyes inflamed by weeping, who came past, drawing a toy cart, wherein lay a little dog quite dead and covered by a piece of matting. In rear, with stoical gravity, and

with a shovel on his shoulder, marched Sergeant Ryder, of Harrower's Company—the same Phil Ryder of a previous chapter—in his undress uniform. Willie was led by the ayah, who rejoiced in the name of Safiya bint Hoyai (one of the wives of the Prophet), though, oddly enough, she was of Hindoo race, but low caste perhaps.

It was a tiny terrier which Harrower had given to Lena when they were at home, and for all the years of Willie's little life it had been his companion and playfellow; so now, as the dog had died—a poisonous snake had bitten it—Gypsy was to be buried, and Willie, in all sincerity of heart, was acting the part of chief mourner, drawing the dog in his cart with swollen eyes and many a backward glance, while Phil Ryder was to perform the duty of sexton, as none of the household would bury an unclean animal, and it might have been deemed sacrilege to cast it into the adjacent Jumna, a tributary of the Holy Ganges.

Harrower was weak enough to consider the dog's death at this crisis as a species of bad omen.

"Poor little Gyp!" said Polly, lifting the mat for a moment, while her blue eyes filled with tears; "she was the dearest and kindest dog in the whole world! Where are you going to bury her?"

"Among these oleanders and acacias, miss," replied the sergeant, saluting her, while Willie, as if impatient of intrusion on his griefs, drew away the cart towards the spot indicated, where Ryder dug a hole, and lifted—he did not throw—the dog in.

"There's a collar on it, Master Willie—shall I take it off?" asked the good-natured sergeant.

"No—oh no," cried Willie, to whom this would seem something like an act of sacrilege; "I could never, never see the collar off poor Gyp—poor Gyp," he added, sobbing, "especially if it was put on another dog—and, oh! how I should hate that other dog!"

So the little English terrier was buried sufficiently deep to prevent it being raked up by the prowling jackals, and Willie lingered near the place after Ryder had sodded it nicely over, and retired, watching with a mournful face the pink and white blossoms of the oleanders falling on the grave of his playfellow, till Harrower, who was quite as good-natured as his sergeant, led him away.

Other persons had seen all this trivial affair, the interment of the dog, an unclean animal, and viewed it with considerable disgust and scorn; these were the Doctor's kitmutgar and Baboo Bulli Sing, of the Delhi Palace, who was in conference with the valet at the outer gate of the garden; but on the appearance of the Doctor and his other two daughters equipped for riding, they separated, and with some precipitation Bulli Sing galloped away.

"Willie, Willie," said the benevolent Doctor, as the child

buried his weeping face in Lena's skirts and refused to be comforted, and even Polly betrayed an emotion that would have surprised the warlike Mussulman who had just retired.

"It is not perhaps a very becoming thing to mourn for a mere dog," said the Doctor, while patting her cheek; but when for years, Harrower, ever since you gave us that dog at home in England, the poor animal has faithfully followed our footsteps; and when the gentle, almost intellectual endowments which kind nature has bestowed upon a domesticated dog are considered, with its sagacity and courage, its disinterestedness and fidelity, its readiness to follow its master in snow and storm, its perfect obedience to man,—the animal which of all the brute creation voluntarily leaves its kindred to associate with man, which watches his departing steps and greets them when returning, which day by day has been by his side and hung about him, then, I say, even a dog's death warrants an emotion of regret,—aye, of sorrow, and see how keenly poor little Willie feels it."

"By Jove, Polly," whispered Rivers, "your papa has turned on the steam for a funeral sermon! But here come the syces with our cavalry."

The report of the dog's interment was whispered abroad in Delhi among the natives at this crisis, with many absurd exaggerations, as an actual religious ceremony, performed by the padre, Weston Sahib—a dog, which was declared by the prophet to be unclean! So this profanation by the Weston household was nearly a source of as much secret speculation as Queen Victoria's greased cartridges.

The party mounted and set forth.

Lena's riding habit, like Kate's, was of plain brown holland, beautifully cut and braided with blue; it showed all the outline, the grace and beauty of her bust and arms, and was pleasantly suggestive of extreme coolness. Her riding hat was white straw, with a long, drooping ostrich feather, and under it, the masses of her glorious dark hair were braided and coiled away to perfection by the clever fingers of Safiyah, her Hindoo ayah. Two champac ear-rings of exquisite Delhi gold, dangled from her tiny ears, and were her only ornaments. Her tight riding gauntlets were of yellow kid, and Harrower thought he never saw her look so well.

The Indian afternoon was in all its splendour; the atmosphere was pleasantly warm, but nothing more, and in a group they made their way to the course, which was already crowded by the civil, military, and mercantile community of Delhi, European, Eurasian, and Native—white, yellow, brown, black, and cream coloured, on horseback, in carriages, phaetons, and palanquins. There were London harness, saddles and chariots, and soft-featured English women, reclining back in them, luxuriously and wearily, showing but too plainly that the fierce heats and moist seasons of India were too much for them, and that their cheeks had lost their roses, which not even the pure breeze of the Welsh valleys, or

the Scottish mountains, or the green Ridings of Yorkshire, could restore now.

There were fast young officers from the cantonments, in smart buggies with large wheels and high stepping horses; showy coaches from Calcutta, with black Parsee merchants, in bright silk gaberdines and high conical caps; wealthy, fat, and sensual-looking Hindoo and Mussulman zemindars and traders; brown ayahs with sickly, white-faced children, and officers in every species of undress uniform with cork helmets; and many ladies, new arrivals from Europe—like the Leslies—in tasteful riding habits, with broad hats and ostrich feathers.

It was a gay sight, with Delhi as a background, its gorgeous domes and spires, its ramparts, mosques and minarets, shining and glittering under the full blaze of an Oriental sun.

As the Westons were a considerable source of attraction, many joined their party, or lingered with it for a time; but Harrower found that though he rode with Lena on his right hand, that Polly was generally on his left; at last he hoped to get rid of the latter young lady when Eversly approached them, mounted on a beautiful flea-bitten Arab, for which he had paid two thousand rupees (about two hundred pounds) at Gazepore, and wearing his white undress uniform, and a solar topee, or sun hat, so like a mushroom that it would have spoiled almost any other face than his, which was a very handsome one.

"You know Eversly—Horace Eversly, of the 54th?" asked Lena.

"Perfectly," said Harrower.

"Of course—everybody does."

"Droll fellow, isn't he?" added Polly.

"Droll? I should rather say solemn, and horribly affected."

"That is what I mean. He actually made his native servants wear white kid gloves at table; did you ever hear of such a thing in India?"

"No, Polly, certainly," said Harrower, laughing at the idea of Ferukh Pandy's copper-coloured digits being so covered.

Nothing was gained by the accession of Eversly, for on pairing off with Polly, who began to flirt with him furiously to tease Rivers, who had somehow piqued her, Dr. Weston, who, worthy man, never conceived he could possibly be in the way, took her place beside Harrower and his eldest daughter.

By many a glance there could be no mistaking, by many a slight pressure of the hand—very slight indeed; by many a modulation of the voice, and venturing lightly to touch her arm—even her shoulder—had Harrower made Lena aware of the deep interest he still felt in her.

If it be true that a woman is quick "to see when a man admires her—nay, that she can tell whether it be mere admiration or love that animates him; moreover, that the discovery is sure to give her an interest in him, even though she may feel that he

can never be more to her than he is at that moment:" if all this is the case, how strange and deep were the emotions and convictions of Lena Weston on finding that her once accepted and so ill-used lover was again by her side, and was only watching for the moment when he might again address her as of old.

Kate and Mellon were together, and were looking so bright and happy! These two had nothing to look back upon with regret or doubt, but had all to look forward to with joy and hope; so Kate was always happy—quietly happy in the society of her lover.

Mellon seemed to have forgotten all concerning his promise o bringing about by a little tact a *tête-à-tête* between Lena and Harrower, so the latter, as he saw the evening passing away, and the course gradually emptying, began to despair of its occurrence at all.

He had a strange presentiment of approaching evil, which weighed upon his mind and oppressed even his tongue. Such forebodings of coming events occur at times, and it is in vain to attempt to investigate them, or account for the philosophy of such emotions, any more than of those visions of sleep which the superstitious term prophetic dreams. We can but admit that presentiments of coming evil *have* existed in all times, less among Englishmen, perhaps, than their countrymen of the northern kingdom. Yet Shakespeare makes the Queen say in "Richard III."—

> "—— Methinks
> Some unborn sorrow ripe in fortune's womb
> Is coming towards me, and my inward soul
> With something trembles, yet at nothing grieves
> More than with parting from my lord the king."

At last they entered the city, and rode through Chandney Choke, a magnificent street, which is ninety feet broad, and nearly a mile in length, and parallel with which runs an aqueduct, shaded by many beautiful trees, and watered from the canal of Ali Merdan Khan.

In scenic effect perhaps nothing can surpass the varied and stirring aspect of this long and glorious thoroughfare, the vast perspective of which was lost amid a cluster of shining domes, and in the golden haze of a sunset that fell in broad flakes of warm light athwart every opening and break in the masses of its light and singular architecture.

Horses, camels, elephants, splendidly caparisoned, were passing to and fro, their harness gorgeous with deep scarlet or yellow fringes, silver bosses, and golden bells. There were growling cheetahs for hunting, led about for sale in chain leashes, dancing fakirs, itinerant beggars, singing gibberish to the monotonous patter of the tom-tom or Indian drum; and palanquins and

bullock-carts went hither and thither among crowds of box-wallahs or native hawkers of every imaginable commodity, clad in clean dresses of white muslin, with their goods or trays on the upper coil of their turbans; water-carriers with red cummer-bunds and great leathern bags slung on their bare brown shoulders, with the mouth under their right arm; peons or messengers with their belts and badges; there, too, were the European soldier in his shell-jacket and orthodox glazed stock and the yellow-visaged sepoy wearing the same uniform, and looking exceedingly uncomfortable therein; and everywhere were swarms of nearly black children, nude as they came into the world, gambolling like imps in the dust, flying paper kites, or making dirt pies (chupatties they called them), exactly like their unbelieving brethren of the western world, and in the same felicitous place—the nearest gutter.

And that the warlike and picturesque might not be wanting, at times there flashed in the sun-light a spear-head, or a glittering helmet of Moorish form, as some horseman in his tippet of mail and chain-shirt, looking like an Emir of Granada, came spurring on, announcing the return of the Princes of Delhi, Mirza Mogul and Mirza Abubeker, from evening prayer at the Jumna Musjid, with all their suwarri.

And those royal personages soon appeared, amid a cloud of dust, the spears, turbans, chain-shirts, sabres, tulwars, and silver-bossed shields of their mounted escort flashing in the sun, around their handsome and well-hung carriage, with a horde of wild-looking peons rushing along on foot, yelling out their titles in the usual fashion.

Baboo Sing and Captain Douglas were of course in the rear.

On this occasion the Princes were accompanied by a pair of gigantic silver kettle-drums, slung on a white elephant of vast size, which trumpeted dolefully as it was goaded along at a rapid trot. This insignia of empire always formed of old the chief feature in the cavalcade of an eastern king, and its revival was considered somewhat significant at this remarkable juncture of Indian politics.

The hurly-burly with which these folks swept past scattered and somewhat deranged the order of our equestrian party.

They had raised a frightful cloud of white dust, and to avoid it Harrower took Lena's bridle, and turned her horse aside into a narrower and more secluded street, overlooked by two great palaces, which in former days had been the dwellings of two of the chief omrahs of the empire.

When they emerged again the dust had subsided, but their friends were gone.

At last they were alone, and entirely together, and Harrower's heart beat painfully.

"They have quite left us behind," said Lena, laughing to conceal her perplexity, "and the sun has set."

"Yes—there goes the evening gun from the flag-staff tower."

"And in ten minutes more darkness will have set in."

"Ah—we have no delicious twilight evenings here, as at home in England, Miss Weston."

She was about to whip up her horse, as they had now reached the end of the vast street, and turned into one less frequented and less bustling, which led to their house near the Jumna, when Harrower checked his horse, and arrested her hand, retaining it in his own.

"Lena—dear Lena," said he, in a tremulous voice, "I would speak with you on a subject which—which—Lena, do you hear me?"

She did not hear him!

She was abstracted; her teeth were clenched, her face was pale, her muscles rigid, and her eyes were fixed on an officer who was riding past at a slow trot, with one hand in a sling. Crape was on his left arm and on the hilt of his sword.

He bowed, lifting his cap as he passed, and something like an imprecation rose to Harrower's lips.

The rider was Colonel Mark Rudkin!

CHAPTER XII.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

"BLESSED be God, the great work goes bravely on!" exclaimed Prince Mirza Mogul, as he twisted an amber rosary round his left wrist, "and the day is at hand when the green flag of the only true Prophet of God shall wave over India, from the mouths of the Ganges to Cabul and Cashmere, and from the plains of Delhi to the Straits of Manara, and Hindoos and Guebers shall alike bow beneath it!"

"And when will that day arrive, for already the 10th of April, when more than two millions of Hindoos were bathing in the gate of the Ganges, at Hurdwar, is past?" said Baboo Bulli Sing.

"Fear not—the day will come inexorably, my brother."

"You honour me, most high—pardon my impatience—but *when?*" persisted the other, with a leer in his black, glittering eye.

"When the hundred years have elapsed since Surajah-ud-Dowlah was defeated by Clive Sahib (may dogs defile his tomb!) on the plains of Plassey. It will be the first day of a new moon—so say astrologers—and therefore will be auspicious to us

as Mahommedans; and it will be the Ruth Juttra of the Hindoos!"

"Then we are already within two moons of that time, even by the computation of the accursed Feringhees."

"In one hundred years will be the fulness of time—the time decreed by fate," said Prince Mirza Abubeker, who had not yet spoken, but who had sat smoking his gorgeous hookah in dreamy thought; "and now we may admit the messengers and the bearers of vakeels, who come to the foot of our father's throne from a thousand tribes and territories."

As there were only about forty of those personages to be received, this speech was merely a piece of Oriental hyperbole.

These remarks were made in the great hall at the palace of Delhi—the *dewan-khana*, or levée room—on that night, when Captain Harrower, on returning to the cantonments from Dr. Weston's house, for the first time in his Indian experiences, found all his servants absent, and that he was left to shift for himself; and the prediction referred to, was one industriously circulated throughout the East, by dancing dervishes, wandering fakirs, and moolahs, that *our power would pass away* in the hundredth year after the great battle of Plassey, when Lord Clive, with a handful of Europeans, sixty seamen, and eight guns (his chief force being the brave old 39th, or Dorsetshire—*Primus in Indis*, as their colours tell us still), won the most splendid of our Indian victories, on the 23rd of June, 1757, routing the Nabob of Bengal, with forty thousand horse and foot, and forty pieces of cannon!

And the night in question was one towards the end of April, 1857.

The palace of the Moguls, which was built on the west bank of the Jumna, by the Shah Jehan, in the sixteenth century, is more than a mile in circumference, and is surrounded by a deep ditch and an embattled wall, of red granite, thirty feet high, loop-holed for cannon, musketry, and arrows. It stands on a spacious esplanade, and is approached by that great street through which flows the canal made by Ali Merdan Khan, the Persian Governor of Candahar, who was so rich that he was supposed to possess the philosopher's stone, and whose magnificent aqueduct conveyed the waters of the Jumna to Delhi, from their pure source in the mountains, one hundred and twenty miles distant.

Against the sky, the outline of the palace presents a remarkable cluster of beautiful, but unmeaning, minarets and steep domes; and Bishop Heber asserts that, except in durability of material, it far excels the castle of Windsor in extent and splendour.

Outside its walls there were sentinels clad in the ordinary scarlet uniform of the late East India Company's service, and on this April night, the guards were furnished by the 54th Regiment of Native Infantry; but the internal duties, and, indeed, nearly all the police arrangements of Delhi were performed by two

native battalions in the pay of the king, and entirely under his control. These men were officered and disciplined in the European manner, but retained their Asiatic dress; they were armed with matchlocks and sabres, and were commanded by the redoubtable Baboo Bulli Sing, a ferocious and unscrupulous fellow, whom the wholesome terror of British law kept within moderate bounds, and from committing many an extravagant act of blood and outrage, which were the genuine promptings of his Oriental nature and education.

Baboo Bulli was, however, a man of undoubted courage, as his patronymic of Sing, which means a lion, imports. He was bearer of the *Jerryput*, a small swallow-tailed standard of cloth of gold, not larger than a handkerchief—a badge of empire, never displayed (like the oriflamme of St. Denis) but when the king took the field in person. Baboo was an expert horseman, and could handle his weapons skilfully. Riding at full speed, he had been known to receive on the point of his sword or spear, an orange, which had been tossed into the air; and, with one blow of a finely tempered Coorg sabre, to hew through a half-inch iron bar, and to slice a man's head to his chin, like a ripe water melon.

He was not tall, but his lithe figure was mere bone and brawn. His limbs were lean and muscular; but this attenuation, the result of constant exercise, was not observable in his costume, loose white drawers, and a tunic of scarlet silk, over which he wore a shirt of fine steel rings, an antiquated defence, even in that part of India, now; and, on the night in question, he had donned in lieu of his steel skull cap, a white turban, with a diamond aigrette and white feather, in its purity, contrasting strongly with the dark, copper-coloured and ferocious visage over which it drooped.

In addition to the troops he commanded, was the Palace Guard of Delhi, under Captain Douglas, whose post was yet to cost him dear; but all these men were carefully excluded from the Dewan-khana, all the avenues to which, on this important night, were guarded by the Soubadar Baboo's chosen troops alone.

The hall of audience is entirely built of snow-white marble; it is of vast size, and has a species of terrace running round it; mosaic work, arabesques in brilliant colours adorn it, and sculptures in relievo, like those in the adjacent mosque of Aurungzebe, which is also of white marble and of exquisite workmanship. It once had a roof of silver, which was torn down by the Mahrattas when they stormed Delhi, and on being coined into rupees, it yielded seventeen lacs.*

A ceiling of rose-coloured silk was drawn over it now, and under this there burned many wax-lights, the perfume of which mingled with the attar of roses—the pure creamy and oily

* Bohn's "India."

essence from the vast rose-fields which are kept by the Zemindars at Gazepore for the express purpose of distillation, and this was lavishly sprinkled about by attendant girls. Pastilles of sandal wood, and of the sweet scented grass of Cashmere, were smouldering in silver burners along the cornices, and the entire hall was redolent with intoxicating and voluptuous perfumes.

In the centre of this wonderful place stood the empty throne of the king of Delhi, for he did not appear, being old and almost a myth, though the great and secret centre of the growing conspiracy.

It was a howdah or seat, upon the back of a great marble tiger, covered by a sheet of cloth of gold; the ascent was by steps covered with polished silver plates, and every fastening was of the same precious metal. The eyes of the tiger were balls of red glass, but its claws and teeth were of polished steel. Within the howdah was a sentence from the Koran worked in pearls upon velvet of green, the holy colour; and the canopy above it had a deep fringe composed of strings of pearls alone.

It was surmounted by the figure of a gigantic bird of Paradise, or peacock, the beak of which was a large emerald; its eyes were carbuncles, and its breast was a mass of diamonds which sparkled with wonderful beauty, in the light of the many wax candles in the candelabra and crystal chandeliers, which were thickly placed or hung about the hall. Such was the throne of the King, Emperor and Padisha of Delhi, who now began to weary of being a pensioner of the British Government.

On each side of this empty seat of royalty, were two chairs of gold filigree work, having swivel rests for the elbows and knees. In these, seated *à la turque*, and under a canopy, were the Princes Mirza Mogul and Mirza Abubeker, richly dressed and armed, their sleepy sensual eyes filled with unusual animation, and their dusky, somewhat flabby faces flushed with as much excitement as it was possible for their blasé natures to feel.

On the verge of the Persian carpet that lay before the throne, were two secretaries squatted cross-legged with writing materials spread before them. These consisted of good English paper, and papier-mâché pen-cases from Cashmere, porcupine quills and inkstands, on desks inlaid with ivory from Bombay; but beyond the names of those present, they were ordered to note—nothing.

Sabre in hand, Baboo Bulli Sing stood near them, grasping the staff of Jerryput, which was *cased* as yet.

In the marble wall behind the throne were openings filled in with fine brass wire, where, at times, the ladies of the Zenana were permitted to peep (without being seen) into the Dewan-khaua; but on this night only the flash of a sabre, or the gleam of a bayonet could be detected there, as even those avenues were guarded by armed men.

Near the throne burned sacred brass lamps of peacock form,

which had served for a time in the tomb of Homaion—doomed yet to be a place of the sternest retribution to those two Princes of Delhi.

Worthy Captain Douglas, walking to and fro on the esplanade in the moonlight, enjoying a fragrant manilla, and playing with his Scotch terrier, though he saw that the horseshoe-shaped windows of the great hall were filled with light, could little conceive the plot that was being schemed out therein.

"Admit the messengers, and the bearers of the Kereetahs," repeated Mirza Abubeker, as he and his brother spread their jewelled fingers over their knees, and relinquished to the pipe-bearers their hookahs, which were of the finest Bidri ware, the snakes or coils being covered with threads of silk and gold.

A scarlet silk curtain which served the place of a door was drawn back, revealing a shifting mass of varied colours beyond, and the flashing of arms and jewels, between a long vista of grotesque columns alternately of red granite and white marble: and then entered noiselessly, and with many a profound salaam, a very singular, and striking, but certainly a motley collection of copper-coloured personages, all of whom bowed nearly to the floor, as they approached the princes.

First came the filthy Dervish Hafiz Falladeen, in his yellow shirt with red ochre smudged over his cheeks and nose, and the living snake twisting and writhing round his waist. Near him shuffled in Ferukh Pandy and the kitmutgar of Dr. Weston, both looking and feeling somewhat scared, by the presence in which they suddenly found themselves. Then came many native officers and sepoys of different regiments, some of them the disbanded mutineers of Barrackpore, and some from the adjacent cantonments, who had been passed out of the quarters, after hours, by sentinels who were in the growing conspiracy; many of those men were in their full uniform, and had on their breasts the silver medals of the campaigns of the Sutledge and elsewhere—the battles of Ferozeshah, Sobraon and Chillianwallah, and all bearing on one side, the head of her Majesty, Queen Victoria—the Feringhee woman who now made greased cartridges.

Among these people towered a venerable Hindoo of powerful figure, but somewhat savage aspect, and who had under his tunic an almost entire suit of the chain mail, worn until after the beginning of the present century by the Mahratta cavalry. His bearing, aspect, and arms, declared him to be a native of the hardy and warlike district of Nagpore—of a people whose only arms were wont to be the sword and spear—their only camp-furniture a horse-cloth.

This man, whose head and face were completely shaven after the custom of his country, was the secret emissary of the Nana of Bithoor—Nana Sahib of atrocious memory!

There were many zemindars or landholders present, whose shawls were of embroidered silk, their scarfs and turbans of Dacca

muslin, their jackets of Chinese fabrics of gorgeous colours; and these costumes with their jewels and precious stones, in the form of brooches, buttons, aigrettes, and the studdings of pistol butts, and the hilts or scabbards of sabres, daggers, and tulwars—their dark expressive faces, gleaming black eyes, and lanky moustaches, made as a whole a striking and most picturesque group.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT TRANSPIRED IN THE DEWAN KHANA.

"WHAT pray you of us—speak?" said the elder brother (whose title of Mirza meant simply Sir or Lord) of the crowd which stood reverentially on the extreme verge of the carpet before the throne.

"We come," said the Dervish Falladeen, whose prefix of Hafiz means "one who has committed the Koran to memory," "to arrange for the extirpation of those who would seek to defile and destroy the faith of Moslem and Hindoo alike, by the confusion of caste and religion."

"Seek the aid of Heaven, O Hafiz," replied Prince Abubeker, as cunningly as if he had heard of all this for the first time.

On this the Dervish, after whirling round several times, with arms outspread and skirts extended, and exhibiting the while a wonderful velocity and skill in preserving his equilibrium, threw up his hands and eyes, and exclaimed with a loud voice:—

"Grant thine aid, O Allah, to us, and to all who aid the religion of Mahommed, and let us at the last day be of that chosen number! Destroy those white-faced Kaffirs who would defile the religion of the Prophet, and at the last day let us *not* be of their excluded number. What says the Koran? 'He who prayeth unto me, his prayer shall be granted.' Hence, the fruit of a new and just design, that this land of the true and great Mogul, though defiled by the presence of heretics, shall be protected like the ark of Noah, and saved like it, from utter destruction. Lords and masters, is it not written, *Kauffir*, *Kerauz*, *Kulb*, —brute, swine, and dog,—heretics and all their brethren, dogs and all their tribes, swine and all their race, are impure? And shall we Mussulmans and Hindoos mingle with the Feringhees who are lower than all these? Forbid it the Prophet! Forbid it Brahma!" he added, turning with a special reverence to the old Mahratta chief, and much more fustian of the same kind followed, exciting deep and wrathful murmurs among his hearers, and much clashing and clattering of weapons.

"God is great," said Prince Mogul, bowing his head, "and

great is Vishnu—not that we believe in the accursed idol," he added, under his beard, to the soubadar Baboo Sing.

"Heaven forbid!" responded that personage, in the same low tone.

With all his apparently fervid Mahommedanism, the Dervish was simply a cunning, a time-serving rascal—one of those hypocrites who exist in all countries, and use religion as a means to an end. He wore that loathsome serpent about his person only to gain favour with the Hindoos, to whom now, like the Egyptians of old, the snake is sacred, and is symbolically placed in the hands of the god Seva, as a destroying power. By this sign he extorted as many pagodas from the Hindoo sepoys as he did rupees from their Mahommedan comrades, and shared both freely enough at festival times, among the dancing girls, fortune-tellers, and serpent-charmers, with other rabble of the bazaars and "back slums" of Delhi, which could boast of such purlieus, like every other large city in the world.

Both the Delhi Princes, or shahzadas, were well educated, and, like Nana Sahib, spoke English pretty well; but on this occasion, of course, they used that polyglot gibberish known as Hindostanee, which is made up of several languages.

"Welcome in the name of God are Mussulman and Hindoo alike, to the Dewan Khana of Delhi," said Prince Mogul, salaaming with his hands, but still remaining seated, while bowing his turbanned head, like a China mandarin. "Be assured, O people! that the sun and dignity of splendour shall arise from this time—the dawn of glory and success, when the sins of the Feringhees will return on their own heads, with that terrible punishment which is their due. Heaven only permits for a time, and for its own mysterious purposes, the inferior to rule over the superior, as those people do over us, and that allotted period in Hindostan is coming to its long-predicted close! Now, indeed, is the time to drive these English from the land of Mahommed and the Hindoo; cut down the dying tree, and its branches will soon be cast into the fire. Even their very ashes will soon pass away. By preparing cartridges with cows' grease for the Hindoos, and others with that of swine for the Mahommedans, ordering them to bite these with their teeth, or tear them with their fingers, the Feringhees and their ruler—a woman, O soul of Homaion!—have sought to taint the caste and confound the faith of all! Be this our cause for battle and revolt, as it was in the days of Vellore, when Craddock Sahib ordered the Hindoo sepoys to shave off their beards, to wear Christian hats, and wash from their foreheads the painted *tilluck*, by which Vishnu was to know them at the day of Doom.* The Sultan of Roum, the King of Egypt, and even Brigadier Napoleon, are with us, and shall we omit now to fill our tents with the gold mohurs, and the white-

* Cause of the Mutiny at Vellore in 1806.

skinned girls of the Europeans? India shall be the grave of the Feringhees, and not one shall go home to their little island in the mists beyond the sea, to say how the others have perished!"

Religious rancour, hatred of race and colour alone, and no pure or high-souled sentiment of nationality animated the prince's hearers; and the objects of many were rendered plain enough by the mode in which, in their murmurs of applause, they rang the changes on "*deen, deen,*" and "*loot-loot*"—religion, faith, and—plunder!

"The great zemindars (land-holders), and even the humble ryots, the tillers of the soil, are with us heart and soul," said Abubeker.

"On their heads be it if they are not," commented the dervish, sternly.

"Every sepoy who slays a Christian shall receive an anklet of gold; and for each officer's head a bag of rupees," said the younger prince, who seemed the most cruel of the two brothers, for he had a narrow forehead, enormous jaw, and small, fierce eyes.

"Death to all!" yelled the dervish, whirling round with frightful velocity; "to European and Eurasian, and to Christians of every race and colour!"

In a low but impressive voice, Baboo Sing added, after a pause—

"These are the sacred commands issued by Mirza Mogul and Mirza Abubeker, in the name of the King of Delhi."

"What saith the Koran of unbelievers?" began the dervish again; "'kill them wherever ye find them, and turn them out of that whereof they have dispossessed you, for temptation to idolatry is more grievous than slaughter.—Whoever shall turn his back upon his religion, and become an infidel, shall become their companion in hell-fire, and remain therein for ever!'"*

"Let us now hear what the Nana of Bithoor has to say to all this," said Prince Mogul, with a low salaam (as he grew weary of the dervish's cant), for Nana usually is the title given to the King of the Mahrattas, but more properly means the head of a state and commander of troops.

"Most high," said the tall and closely-shaven old Mahratta in the antique chain shirt, as he came forward, bending over an enormous tulwar; "the Nana Seereek Dhoondoo Punth desires you to be assured by me, Azimoolah Khan, that he is with you in all things; that he considers the English but as low caste usurpers, and as tyrants who seek to degrade India, to rob its inhabitants, and subvert their usages, as they mock, in their ignorance, all that which is not English. The number of horse, foot, and cannon, which he may be able to bring forth by the appointed time, are stated in his letter within this kereetah."

Kneeling, he handed to Mogul the letter, a case of tissue

* Koran, Chapter II.

and green silk, in which missives to persons of rank are usually enclosed.

Mogul glanced at it hurriedly, and with an air of supreme satisfaction handed it to his brother, who said—

"Bear our warmest thanks and wishes to the Nana; in due time a phirmaun will be sent him, with the final instructions of our father, the King; and may the shadow of God be over you as you go back by the iron engine of the Feringhee, whose speed puts the ekhas of our fathers to shame."

"May Brahma long shower down the choicest favours on the King and people of Delhi!" exclaimed the old Mahratta chief, as he retired.

The princes bowed, for, though Mahommedans, at this great crisis they were not above cultivating and flattering the followers of Vishnu, who numbered so many millions.

"And now," said the elder brother, with a sleek and cunning smile, "shall we hear what our faithful sepoys have to tell us?"

This caused some commotion among a group of sepoy officers and soldiers who were clustered together in close and earnest conversation; and a havildar, or sergeant, now came forward.

He was a small-boned, spare, and active-looking man, about forty years of age; his eyes, hair, and whiskers were jet black, and his moustachios were of such enormous length, that they were carried over his small gold-fringed shoulder-straps, or scales, and tied behind, imparting an almost grotesque expression of ferocity to a face that was stolid enough in expression till he became excited, when his eyes shone with a terrible glare. He had seen much service, as the medals indicated, on the breast of his scarlet uniform, which was faced with yellow.

Betelnut rendered his copper-like skin darker than its natural hue. He wore his shako with its brass ornaments, his buff-belt and sword-bayonet, and a pair of large, loose, white cotton gloves, and he seemed at perfect ease when led forward by Baboo Bulli Sing, and introduced as

"Pershad Sing, a Hindoo sergeant from the cantonments."

"Most high," said he, with a profound military salute, "the Soubadar Major, of the 54th Native Infantry, sends his compliments, his most humble and lowly salaam to the Mighty King of Delhi, through me, as duty renders his attendance here to-night impossible."

"This is unfortunate, havildar; but what is your message?" asked Mogul.

"The havildars, naicks, and sepoys of the 54th will be true to their salt, their faith, and to him who is the refuge of the world."

"Good—this is well!"

"They hold to the purity of the caste, and are ready to revolt."

"Deen—deen!" was now heard on every side, and more than one fat and sensual Hindoo zemindar woke up from the standing doze, induced by Indian hemp and French brandy.

"Chup! chup!" (silence) thundered Baboo Sing, striking on the floor the standard pole he grasped.

"Ah, your regiment is ready to revolt?"

"But the men will *not* murder their Feringhee officers."

A growl of rage followed this unexpected assertion.

"They are all kind to us, they and their Mem Sahibs, who are good to our wives and our little ones, and give us rupees, and even gold mohurs for *our* festivals, and fat Patna sheep and rice at the feast of Eed for *yours*. We love the Colonel, Ripley Sahib, as our father, and we must be true to our salt."

"And you will not slay them?"

"No—but the men of any *other* regiment may," replied the sergeant, with a grin, while his eyes assumed the expression of those of a shark or a cobra-capello, so keen, cold-blooded, and snaky were they in their deliberate malignity.

"And you will not oppose this other regiment?" asked Abubeker, whose eyes caught something of the same fiendish light.

"We shall not."

"Good; then your scruples are easily got over. It is well, Pershad Sing; and you will find that the King of Delhi is a better paymaster than the Company in the end. Among the native officers we shall revive the old Khans of Delhi, who, on receiving their title from the king, had each to maintain and discipline two hundred and fifty horse for his service, so rewards shall not be wanting. Adieu, havildar; may the protection of Heaven be over you," he added, as this finished traitor salaamed his way into the background. "Who come next?"

"Messengers from Meerut," replied Baboo Sing, as three soldiers, a sergeant of the 3rd, another of the 11th, and a naick, or corporal, of the 20th (all regiments of Native Infantry), deserters from Meerut, and apparently Hindoos, came forward, and asserted that the corps they represented were all ready to revolt and slay their officers, without compunction.

"Swear it!" cried the Dervish, doubtfully.

"We swear it, by Brahma, Seva, and Vishnu," cried the three, simultaneously, raising their dingy right hands as they mentioned the three objects of Hindoo idolatry.

"And you swear it by the Holy Ganges, whose waters yet must wash your sins away?"

"By the hoary hair of Mahadera!" they exclaimed together, and this was a fearfully solemn oath, for thus do the Hindoos style those large and hoary icicles in the snow-wall at Gangutri, an icy barrier three hundred feet thick, over the lofty brow of which the Holy River issues from between the five vast peaks of Mahadera, among the Himalaya mountains.

"Our regiments are of opinion," said one, "that we ought to strike when the Christians are unarmed in their churches."

"Hah—these unwashed Feringhees pray but once in seven days, while we, the faithful, pray daily," added another.

Many emissaries from Simlah, Allahabad, Futteypore, and other quarters were received, and gave similar promises of treachery, cruelty, and bloodshed.

As all these men were to leave the palace and pass into the town or elsewhere without exciting suspicion, they were ushered out by two or three at a time—a precaution almost needless, as nearly all the outer sentinels were in the deadly secret. Perhaps the last questioned was Ferukh Pandy.

"Kitmutgar to Harrower Sahib, speak; your master brought a party of Europeans to strengthen the garrison?" asked Baboo Bulli Sing, haughtily.

"Yes, aga," replied the other, cowering low.

"How long since?"

"Not quite a moon, aga Sahib."

"How many of the unclean were with him?"

"Temple Sahib, a Jemmadar, and three score."

"Bah! they are only a mouthful—you may go."

"And I shall make the blood of Harrower Sahib pay for that of my brother, who was slain at Barrackpore," said Pandy, with a savage grin, as he departed in company with a Fakir.

"But one remains, most high," said Baboo Sing.

"And who is he?" yawned Abubeker.

"The kitmutgar of the padre."

"Weston Sahib—let him approach," said the two princes, suddenly becoming all attention.

"Long live the Refuge of the World!" cried the trembling valet, with his forehead on the extreme verge of the carpet; "I am Assim Alee."

"You know where the padre's daughters sleep—especially the youngest?" asked Baboo, giving him a sharp poke with the lance of the jerryput, as if to brighten his ideas.

"Aga Sahib, you mean the little Missy Baba Pollee?" said the fellow, with a leering eye, a cringing air, and tightly folded palms.

"Yes; she with the golden hair. You will keep your eyes upon her and on her sisters, and answer for them with your head; for when *the time comes*, all white women and girls are to be brought hither as lawful spoil. Hither, do you hear, within the palace walls," said Baboo, as the princes disdained to speak.

"The wives of the unbelievers are the just prey of the faithful, so saith the forty-ninth chapter of the Koran, which was revealed at Mecca, and is entitled 'She who is tried,'" howled the hideous dervish, who yet lingered by the door.

"As for the men, the tulwar and the bayonet will soon make kabobs of them; and as the padre Weston is so fond of dogs, by the soul of the Prophet, he shall lie in the grave with a dog's

head in lieu of his own!" said Abubeker, clapping his hands at the idea.

"But most high," said the rascally kitmutgar, "one of the eldest daughters is about to be married, and how can I——"

"Married!" exclaimed Mogul, furiously; "and to whom?"

"Mellon Sahib, of the Bengal Fusileers."

"Good—we shall take care of Mellon Sahib; enough—you may go," said Abubeker, laughing.

The truth was, as the sequel proved, that Mirza Mogul had fixed his mind on placing both Kate and Lena in his own private quarter of the palace, while Abubeker, less covetous, though equally cruel and sordid, resolved to content himself with Polly—poor little Polly, so playful and girlish in her waggery, with her beaming blue eyes, her soft English face, and the rich blood mantling in her cheek, in all the flush of her young and joyous life—she could little imagine the terrible horoscope these great folks were casting for her.

"Ere *Sohan*" (the seventh month, or July) "has come and gone, all will be over—all won, or all lost!" said Mogul to his brother, as they rose from their chairs of state, and retired, each wearily to his zenana, for all unused to much exercise of mind and body, fat, puffy, and effete, used-up and *blasé* Oriental sensualists, the long interview had proved quite enough for them—and whither they went we need not follow them.

* * * * *

As each sepoy regiment had a soubadar major, who could act as colonel, a soubadar or captain, a jemmadar or subaltern, and a complete staff of havildars and naicks, or sergeants and corporals, to each company—a cumbrous, dangerous, and useless arrangement—it was quite apparent that when once the European officers were destroyed, the battalion *organization* would still remain perfect in all its parts, and every way fit for service, throughout all the three great native armies of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras.

This scene in the dewan-khana proves that Major Abbot, of the 74th Native Infantry, was correct, when he wrote to the effect that the coming insurrection had been organized and matured in the palace of the King of Delhi, and with his full knowledge and sanction, in his rash, but not unnatural desire to re-establish himself in the full and free sovereignty of his native country; and the method adopted was simply that of spreading false and alarming reports that the British Government intended to subvert the religion of the people, first by insidious means, and then to enforce upon them that of Christendom—a plan of which they had not the most vague idea.

In some points the Hindoos were even more furious than their Moslem countrymen, while those ideas lasted—especially the princes and land-owners.

"High-caste Brahmins, all as proud as Lucifer," says an able

writer, "they deemed that of right to them belonged the treasures and the Empire of India. Hampered with debt, they looked for the day of a general spoliation. Chafing under restraint, they panted to indulge themselves in unbridled license. They were bent upon the foundation of a gigantic military despotism. They looked forward to the time when soubadars and jemmadars should be maharajahs and nawabs; when the taxes should be collected by sepoy receivers-general, and paid into sepoy treasuries; when every private should have his zenana filled with the loveliest daughters of Rohilcund and Lahore; when great landholders from Bundelcund and Orissa should come with cases of diamonds to buy a favourable decision from Mungal Pandy; when great merchants from Liverpool and Marseilles should come with bags of sovereigns, to buy leave of Peer Bux to establish a factory at Mutlah or Chandernagore. They looked down on the Ghoorkas as savages, and regarded the heroes of Chillianwallah and Ferozeshah as a conquered race. At length, in the plenitude of their pride and folly, they began to question the efficacy of the British name!"

So much for the pride of the Brahmin, and of the petted, pampered, and, in some instances, certainly misguided sepoy.

So, all ignorant of the horrors in secret preparation for them, the poor and unsuspecting Europeans in Delhi, as elsewhere in India, went about the affairs of everyday life; the judge attended his court, the divine his church, the merchant his office; the clerk stuck to his desk, and the school-boy to his task; the young officer hunted and shot, danced at assemblies, flirted at promenades and the band-stand or on the course, played cricket as only "the eleven of ours" could play, made up his book on the Sonepore plate or the Calcutta welter, and made bets of gloves with the ladies, who talked of their ayahs, their babies, their bonnets, and the latest fashions from Europe,—of the forthcoming amateur theatricals, in which they *would* cast "Still Waters" after a manner of their own, to wit, Captain Harrower as "John Mildmay," Lena Weston as "Mrs. Mildmay," Mrs. Chili Chutney as the flirting widow Sternhold, and Doyle of the Fusileers as "Captain Hawksley," and so on, and so on; and, of course, all went deeply into the pleasures of an intended grand fancy ball, in honour of the Queen's accession to the throne—and this was fixed to take place in June.

Alas! ere *that* time the boom of cannon-shot was to pass over all India, from sea to sea!

CHAPTER XIV.

WHICH TREATS OF VARIOUS MATTERS.

IT was with extreme annoyance that Harrower, on the morning after the ride on the course, read the following paragraph in the *Delhi Gazette*, which had copied it from the *Bengal Hurkaru*:—

"Colonel Mark Rudkin, of the Oude Irregulars, is appointed to serve on the staff of Brigadier Graves, at Delhi, until further orders. This gallant officer is already decorated with that most distinguished order the Star of St. Michael and St. George, and the Cross of the Bath."

"Bah—what next?" muttered Jack.

"Every person possessed of common humanity must join with us in our earnest sympathy for the great sorrow and bereavement so lately endured by this most meritorious officer."

"Bosh!" commented Jack, as he dashed the silver muffineer, with which he had been sprinkling his toast, to the further end of the bungalow; "we all know how much editorial sympathies, regrets, or congratulations are worth; but I hope Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Rudkin appreciates them duly."

Harrower's attempt at having a private interview with Lena Weston had begun and ended, as related.

So Rudkin had actually come to Delhi, which is more than eight hundred miles up the country from his former station! It did not seem probable that he would traverse all that amount of distance by rail, steamer, and dawk, simply for a change of scene, and to soothe his agitated feelings; but his arrival was the source of that presentiment of coming evil which had so oddly weighed on Jack's usually matter-of-fact mind.

Lingering over his breakfast—chicken, toast, and cold tea—he let the *Delhi Gazette* drop on the floor, and planted a foot on it, partly in spite, partly in abstraction, while gazing listlessly through the large open windows of his bungalow to the groves of trees, beyond where the cool and strongly-defined shadow of the verandah tempered the scorching white glare, in which the far-stretching cantonments were steeped, so that they seemed to vibrate and quiver in the sunny heat; and there, the motley-dressed sepoys, and some of his own Cornish lads, could be seen at times, passing or hovering about the gate of the compound.

"Such a stupid life this is!" he grumbled; "this dull cantonment business and monotonous musketry practice on the Hythe system—after the Sutledge—and the past years."

He could little foresee that in a month or so hence he would have excitement enough, and to spare.

How mortifying alike to Harrower's love and his self-esteem was a sense of the influence that man seemed still to have over her, false as he had been to her; yet had not Lena a mysterious influence over Harrower, false as she had been to *him?*

She had not returned Rudkin's bow; he could remember *that;* but then her paleness, the expression of her face, the stony eyes, the rigid muscles, the abstraction which prevented her hearing the earnest words addressed to her when he took her hand in his!

"She seemed sorely bewildered, poor thing!" said Jack, mentally.

Might it not be—whispered Hope—that love had nothing to do with the marked emotion she exhibited; but indignation—pure indignation, only?

When he lifted his cap, Rudkin had seemed bald or nearly so; he was certainly grey about the temples, and his face had more lines in it than when he came in an evil hour to Thorpe Audley. Though he was still a distinguished and fine-looking man, five or six years had certainly made a change in his appearance.

This was consolatory to Jack—very—as he surveyed his thick, dark, curly pate, his heavy moustachios, clear bright eyes, and unwrinkled cheeks, in the mirror; but then he had not the rank, pay, and allowance of Lieutenant-Colonel, and he could not exhibit the Cross of the Bath, and the sparkling Star of St. Michael and St. George, on the somewhat tight coatee of the Cornish Light Infantry.

"Alas!" thought Jack, "poor me—poor fool! Am I actually John Trevanion Harrower, to allow such to fret me in this fashion? But how true it is, that a lover rears an edifice on sand, expanding atoms to worlds, ready at one moment to fear too much, at another fearing nothing—all hope and happiness. Anyway, his imagination runs riot, till he leaves no more to invent for his own torment or joy. . . . So this Rudkin—the sorrowing widower, has, as I predicted, shown up at last—d——n him! but I'll not give in yet—I'll bring Lena to book on the matter, come what may, and how it shall end, Heaven only knows! One thing is sure, that if I fail I'll get out of Delhi, even if I should have to send in my papers."

Noon was past ere he was aware of it, and with a cigar in his mouth, and an umbrella over his head, as the sun shone hotly, he sallied forth for a lonely ramble near the Jumna, leaving his compound by a back gate.

It is the fate of boyhood to be smitten by many a puerile fancy; but his passion for Lena had been far beyond such as these. It was the first dream of his youth, certainly; but it had grown up amid the quietness of family intercourse—of constant propinquity in a secluded English country rectory; and from such a passion, a second nature, there was neither recovery nor escape.

From his reverie he was roused by finding himself on the

margin of the broad and rolling Jumna, the waters of which come from a cavern of icicles in the distant Himalayas, and which are low at that season, exhibiting, where the flat-bottomed boats were not floating, great heaps of sand, and here and there a corpse or so floating down the current, with the vultures hovering over or alighting on them; a black alligator lurking in a muddy creek, half-hidden among the luxuriant undergrowth that flourished, large-leafed and rank, amid the slime. There, too, were objects which looked like large white pebbles, and dry branches lying on the sand, or by the margin of the stream; but these Harrower knew now to be human bones and sun-bleached skulls, that might lie there till the August rains swept them into the Ganges, at Allahabad.

"Truly Ali Merdan Khan's canal for pure water was a sanatory necessity in Delhi," thought Jack, as he turned with something of loathing from this sight, all the more readily that he was annoyed by the importunities of a Fakir, or Hindoo dervish, who suddenly started up from the long grass before him.

He was one of the Gymnosophists, and was consequently destitute of clothing, and seemed more like a gorilla than a man. His person was covered with hair and dirt; his locks overhung his wild eyes in matted masses, that had never known a comb, and his nails were of enormous length.

This fellow, Gunga Rai, was one who haunted the cantonments, and was a dangerous rival to the Mahommedan dervish Falladeen, who dared not emulate him in the variety or horror of his self-imposed penances, such as sometimes sitting for many days and nights in one position, rolling his body on the earth for miles, and suspending himself head downwards over a slow fire. He was fierce and clamorous in his demand for alms to enable him, as he pretended, to build a temple and dig a well, as an atonement for his sins, so Harrower angrily tossed a few annas to him, and hurried off.

As he made his way towards a mango-tope, or clump of trees, for coolness, he came suddenly on Mellon and Captain Douglas, who were both idling about in the same fashion as himself; but both had fowling-pieces, to shoot any game that might come within range.

"Heard the news, Harrower?" asked Douglas.

"About Rudkin's arrival—oh yes," replied the other, who at present was a man of one thought.

"Rudkin? whom—oh! you mean of the Oude Irregulars, who has come here on the staff. No—something more important than that."

"What is it?"

"I mean the news that came to Brigadier Graves this morning."

"Of what—more sepoys in revolt?"

"Exactly; the mutiny is increasing."

"Where?"

"Everywhere, apparently but we had certain unpleasant news from your old head-quarters. It would seem," said Douglas, "that on the third of this month, the 7th Oude Irregular Infantry refused to receive the cartridges for their Enfield rifles, and tumultuously broke their ranks, leaving the parade ground; influenced, I doubt not, by the teaching of some Hindoo Fakirs and dancing dervishes."

"By Jove! I would hang a score or two of those filthy fellows; and if that did not stop their work, I would try the effect of grape shot!" said Harrower.

"Sir Henry Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner, seems something of your way of thinking, for he paraded all the native troops in the station, and drew them up in front of the Cornish Light Infantry——"

"Ours!" cried Jack, with a flush of real enthusiasm.

"Yes, and a brigade of eight field-pieces, which were loaded with grape; but the sight of the lighted matches——"

"And of ours, under Inglis, I hope?"

"Proved all too much for the nerves of the Pandies, who threw down their rifles and fled in wild confusion, deserting *en masse*, to spread dissatisfaction elsewhere. So, daily, matters are looking worse."

"Greased cartridges, indeed—the idea of the thing!" said Mellon, coaxing, to their utmost length, his long fair whiskers; "by Jove! Jack, those donkeys of Brahmins and Rajpoots think themselves irretrievably degraded in this world, and damned in that to come, if they polish a boot or cook a beefsteak; and, doubtless, Windsor soap and Dutch butter have certain diabolical tendencies in them as well."

"Ripley tells me," added Captain Douglas, that the 54th have already begun to show a contempt for their European officers, by coming into the bungalows with their shakoes off, and their shoes *on*. If this kind of spirit spreads, ere long, our Indian regiments will become mere ropes of sand, to use an old military phrase."

"Let it come to the musket, then, speedily," said Harrower, laughing, but with a bitterness which Mellon only understood, and which made Douglas raise his eyebrows with a little surprise; "good! we shall soon have other work to do, than studying the 'Army List,' and the thermometer; flirting on the race-course, spearing hogs, and potting tigers, practising a new stroke at billiards, or any other approved Anglo-Indian mode of killing the breathless, broiling day."

Matters were indeed looking ill, even at Delhi. Though Jack was too pre-occupied generally to observe that the sepoys were sulky, and omitted to salute him, he began to find that Ferukh Pandy failed on some occasions to ice his wine, on others to fill the jars for his bath; that his syces levanted bodily with some of his stable property, and that the Hindoo Fakir, Gunga Rai (re-

placing the Dervish Falladeen), perched on an elephant, with a red flag displayed from the howdah, dared to preach rebellion and mutiny to the sepoys and camp-followers at the very gate of his compound, till he came forth, horsewhip in hand, on which Gunga Rai took himself off, with his huge lumbering quadruped.

Surrounded as the Fakir was by a mob of excited natives, this was a somewhat dangerous exhibition of authority on the part of Harrower, for Gunga Rai enjoyed far and near a wonderful reputation for sanctity; and had been, so people *said*, buried six feet deep in the earth before the Cashmere gate of Delhi, sewed up in a coffin, the lid of which was further secured by the seals of Mirza Mogul, and Mirza Abubeker, and that he had remained there while a crop of barley was sown, grown, and reaped, above the spot where he lay; a marvellous story in which Jack had, of course, not the slightest faith.

According to Anglo-Indian etiquette, Colonel Rudkin, on his arrival, left his card with most of the principal residents, and, among others, *twice* at the house of Dr. Weston.

Of this Harrower was duly informed by his friend, Rowley Mellon, who added that the Colonel had already taken the crape band off his left arm and sword-hilt.

"A sign that his short season of mourning is over," said Jack.

Aware that the Colonel had used his eldest daughter very ill, Dr. Weston, on receiving his card, resolved that he would not personally return his visit, or in any way seek his society; but Colonel Rudkin, he considered, had lately suffered a great calamity, and, that as a Christian clergyman, he was bound not to ignore his grief, or to bruise the bruised, and that he must say something concerning it.

So he sent his card by the hands of his kitmutgar—the same precious rogue whom we have seen so lately figuring in the Delhi palace—with "kind and earnest condolences" pencilled thereon. This was quite enough for the widower, who, after a proper interval, thought himself warranted in calling again, and hence his second visit; but, oddly enough, on both occasions no one was at home but Polly, who knew enough of the story to be intensely reserved to him, and little Willie, who fairly shunned him; for the Colonel had, at times, an expression of face that children do not like.

However, Rudkin had twice lifted his hat to the sisters when they were riding on the course, attended by Mellon, Rivers, Eversly, and others. Kate's return, though polite, and Lena's studiously averted face, did not invite him to join them, to speak, or even approach, till they all met at a dinner-party at the house of Mrs. Patna Rhys, who, in perfect ignorance of the past, assigned Lena to the Colonel's care during the evening, which certainly proved the most uncomfortable she had ever spent in India.

Whatever were the Colonel's secret thoughts or ultimate intentions, the circumstance of his having seen Lena and her old lover, Harrower, riding so amicably together, and apparently without companions, on the evening he arrived in the city, made him doubtful of his ground and the strength of his position; but Mark Rudkin was cool and wary—he could wait and watch.

Though his manner, his voice, or eye never betrayed it, the old passion of this selfish lover revived amid the charm of Lena's presence; for, though quiet and most lady-like, her mien and ways were very alluring. Somehow it seemed innate and inborn with her, that whatever she said was expressed happily, and whatever she did was done with a singular grace that was peculiarly her own.

Few people smile constantly; yet it was a provoking peculiarity of the Colonel's that his mouth always smiled, especially when his quiet, earnest, and observant grey eyes did *not*.

His beard was luxuriant and bushy; every one who has been in a warm climate knows how fast such hirsute appendages grow; and his moustache, which was brown, grizzled with grey, concealed effectually an upper lip that otherwise would have been seen to be unpleasantly thin.

He was studiously and carefully polite and unmarked in his bearing to Lena, and with considerable tact and skill spoke in very good taste of general events and occurrences, dwelling much upon the Barrackpore mutiny, all it foreshadowed, and so forth.

He contrived thus to put poor Lena tolerably at her ease, and she felt deeply thankful for one circumstance alone; that Harrower had not been invited to the same dinner party, as his presence only would have been wanted to complete her secret confusion and annoyance.

CHAPTER XV

HARROWER PROPOSES A SECOND TIME.

HARROWER flattered himself, however, that he had still the best of the game, in so far that he had the easy *entrée* of the Doctor's hospitable mansion as an old friend and a welcome visitor to all; Polly invariably sprang to embrace him, and Willie clambered about his back and legs, with a confident vivacity not always pleasing after a hot ride under an Indian sun.

We may form a hundred carefully laid plans for the development of an earnestly desired scheme, and yet find them all signal failures, while, unexpectedly, a happy or lucky opportunity—one

beyond our fondest hopes—may suddenly be given us, by the merest chance.

So it was with Harrower. Calling one evening at the Westons', he was informed by the durwan that all the family were from home, at service in the Doctor's church—"all except Missee Lena, who was in the garden."

"Alone?"

"Yes, sahib, alone."

In the garden and unattended! There he went at once in search of her. The evening was pretty far advanced now. Shorn of his beams by a species of amber haze, the crimson Indian sun was shining almost from the very horizon, and thus the shadows of house and tree, of mosque and minaret, were thrown to a vast distance across the white sandy plain of Delhi. In a few minutes, as there is no twilight in these regions, Harrower knew that it would be absolute night, and that he had no time to lose in finding Lena among the intricacies of an Indian garden, which is always extensive and full of large shrubberies.

There were the gorgeous acacias and oleanders which shrouded the grave of little Gyp the terrier; the baubool breathing perfume from its bells; the sensitive plant spreading itself over whole borders, and so true to its name that a touch of the smallest leaf would cause the whole parterre to close and shrink up; and amid these were masses of roses, but without that sweetness of perfume, possessed by the same flowers in a European garden. Yet, what the parterres lacked in fragrance, was almost compensated by the wonderful luxuriance of the trees and shrubbery; the graceful arching of the date palms, and the splendour of that remarkable tree, which is covered by scentless flowers, the size of pœony roses, which, when blown in the morning are of the purest white, but gradually change as the day wears on, passing through every shade of red, till the rising moon finds them of the deepest and richest crimson.

There, too, were sweet lemons, oranges, and the citron, with its gorgeous blossoms and fragrant perfume, and every branch and spray were alive with birds which had not yet retired to rest; the brown dove with its blue breast; the blue jay and others with gorgeous plumes and pinions of brilliant purple, yellow, and scarlet; but all as voiceless and tuneless as the ring-necked parroquets and the crested sparrows, whose breasts shone like gold; and there, too, was the busy little bird who sews two leaves together with his sharp bill, and swings himself to sleep from the branch of some long creeper.

The fabled Rose Garden of Irem could scarcely surpass in beauty and luxuriance that through which Harrower made his way in search of Lena, whose figure—in her light muslin dress, with a Cashmere shawl thrown over her head and shoulders, he saw on a kind of terrace, which afforded a view on one side of the Jumna, and on the other of the city, with all its vast extent of

flat-roofed streets, its stately public buildings, the palace of the moguls, the enormous mosque of Shah Jehan, which is built entirely of red and white marble, and is the greatest and most magnificent place of worship in India. Its gates are brass, its domes covered with thin plates of shining gold. The entire scene was one of wonderful beauty, especially as Harrower viewed it then while the full moon was rising, like a mighty shield of silver from the horizon, beyond the dark dome of Homaion's tomb, and its silent grove of giant palms, spreading her mild light over the whole sky, throwing the shadow of the Kutab Minar, the highest column known in the world, to a vast distance, forming as it does the most striking feature of that magnificent view, which embraces two cities, the old and the new, a great river, and a far extended plain.

Lena seemed absorbed in thought, in the beauty of the night or of the scenery, for she was unaware of Harrower's approach until he stood close by her side, when she gave a little nervous start, but held out at once her ungloved hand, which literally seemed snowy white, in the moonlight.

"Your step startled me," said she, laughing; "I thought one of those huge birds from the balustrade had come down beside me," she added, pointing to the adjutants on the roof of the house, which towered up white as chunam plaster could make it, with all its great windows shining in the silver sheen. "I am alone at home—how disappointed papa and Kate will be, to say nothing of your prime favourite, Polly."

"A lovely night," said Harrower, whose heart was beating faster, perhaps, than it had ever done, even in his boyhood; "but do you not fear the dew?" he added, laying his hand lightly, but for only an instant, on her wrist.

"Oh no—that is, not yet—the sun has just set," said she, as she folded her hands in her shawl, a motion, which, slight as it was, seemed to contain something like a hint, and rather put Jack out. It only made him, however, after a moment, more resolute to tell that which was uppermost in his thoughts.

"Captain Harrower," Lena was beginning——

"*Captain* Harrower!" said he reproachfully.

"Well," she resumed, with a little confusion of manner.

"Once upon a time you were not wont to address me thus," said he, shaking his head, and eyeing her with a sad smile.

"Well, then, Jack—Jack Harrower, if you will have it so."

"Oh, Lena, your voice sounds now more like the voice of the old time—the dear old time at Thorpe Audley!"

"I thought you had got over all that," said she, in a voice of forced calmness; "your—your——"

"What, Lena?"

"Your fancy for me, I mean."

"Oh, Lena, no, no, no! a thousand times no!" he exclaimed impetuously; but she did not look once towards him, for her

dark eyes seemed to wander over the domes and spires of Delhi, and the ruins of the old city that lay far along the river.

"I thought that by this time certainly you would no longer find any attraction in me—and—and that another——"

"No other shall ever replace your image in my breast, Lena Weston," said Jack gravely—so gravely that his voice sounded almost stern.

In her growing confusion at the turn so suddenly taken by the conversation, Lena conceived the false idea of affecting to think that he was jesting, a great mistake with one so earnest, and so honestly serious as John Harrower.

"Tell me, please," she asked, with a little gasping laugh, "is this flirtation or romance?"

"Flirtation or romance—oh, Lena Weston," said he, rasping up the gravel with his spurred heel, "how can you speak thus—and to me?"

"One hears so much of that mock love-making among military men, and which means anything but love."

"Mock love-making," said Harrower, repeating her words again in a sorrowful and bitter tone of voice.

"Yes," she continued, in the same manner, but growing paler, for she felt ashamed of herself.

"But Lena, do you consider that I am addressing you after the lapse of five years, and that as I loved you at home in dear England, so do I love you now!"

"Poor Jack!" said she, laying both her pretty hands upon his arm, while her earnest eyes filled with tears, "I don't deserve such love—even little Polly tells me so. My heart——"

"May it never feel the doubt and sorrow mine does now!"

"It has felt *more*, Jack."

(When that scoundrel jilted you—he was about to say, but restrained the mortifying speech, and gulped down his anger with a sigh.)

"It has never felt more love than mine for you, Lena," said he; "but you are shivering, my dear girl: draw your shawl closer—take my arm, and let us walk a little."

"Harrower," said Lena, as she placed her hand through his arm, and then they slowly promenaded the terrace to and fro, "there is a writer who says—for I committed the passage to memory—'Of all the ingredients requisite to form a happy union for life, love is of all others the most necessary. Like the sun, it not only brightens and gilds every amiable quality of the beloved object, but draws forth every latent virtue in our hearts, and excites us to become as perfect as we can, in order to merit that affection which constitutes our true happiness.'"

"And am I to infer that you cannot love me thus?"

"I can well and truly like you—esteem you, Jack."

"But you surely loved me once, Lena?" he urged, in a soft

voice; "love me but so again, and the mournful gap will be forgotten."

"No, Harrower—no, Jack—it cannot be."

"Why—why?"

"When I loved you as a simple, trusting girl, you had my whole regard—my whole heart; *now*, it is not worth your acceptance—yours of all men."

"What morbid folly is this?" he exclaimed; "or is it that—that you love that man still?"

Harrower's cheek flushed hot and scarlet as he said this; she shivered a little, but did not reply.

"Ah, Lena, remember the song you used to sing long ago!"

"We used to sing so many—which?" she asked, looking up at him with a sad smile.

> "'Let no one for more loves pretend
> Than he has hearts in store;
> Love once begun should never end,—
> Love *one*, and love no more!'

"So sang the great Scottish Marquis two hundred years ago, and, by my soul, his single verse contains the essence of all the love ditties that have been penned since the song of Solomon."

He paused for a minute, but instead of replying, she continued to walk with him in silence, with her head drooping, her long, black lashes cast down, and her pale beauty in the clear moonlight was very alluring. Jack felt that all now depended on himself: so he resumed, while pressing her soft arm against his breast, as he had often done in former times in the pleasant green lanes at home,—

"My love for you, Lena," and in spite of himself his voice trembled, "is not the heedless love of a boy; I am now thirty years old; I have served the Queen twelve of these, and have been thrice wounded. It is the steadfast, life-long love of a man, and I hope an honest one, that I proffer you—a heart that never in thought or deed wandered from you."

His words conveyed an unintentional reproach.

"In all that time since—since we were parted," said Lena, scarcely knowing what to say, "you must have seen much—many changes."

"Yet I am not changed."

"Many faces, far excelling what you fancy mine to be," said she, smiling in his eyes.

"None that seemed so to me, Lena—none that I could love as I have loved you."

"Oh, Jack—what can I say! Indeed—indeed, I am not deserving of all this," said she, covering her face with her hands.

"Lena, a reconciliation is the most tender episode of friendship; should it be less so with love?"

"No reconciliation is necessary, surely, Harrower; we did not quarrel."

"Certainly, Lena, we did not quarrel; would to God it had only been that, for I should soon have been at your feet again; but—but——"

"I cut you to the heart—there—that is what you would say, Jack, is it not?'"

How tenderly modulated was her voice!

"Let our love be again as it was in the happy old time; that I would call a reconciliation, and all the better feelings of our hearts, all the softest emotions of our souls, will return in greater strength. Be my wife, dear, dear Lena! After all that has passed, will you—will you not marry me?"

Her right hand was pressed between both of his, and his eyes were bent upon hers, with an intensely earnest, searching, and almost sad expression; but Lena shook her head, and looking down with equal sadness, said distinctly,—

"I shall never marry, Harrower."

"Never?"

"Kate will, and Polly may, but I shall abide by my poor old papa, and be the prop of his declining years. You must have perceived how much he has failed already in this hot climate?"

"He looks a little older, certainly; but I have means, so let me be the other prop. I'll sell out, and we'll all go home to Cornwall—home to the pleasant little valley where my father's house stands by the base of Cadonburrow. I would rather see the grey mists from the Atlantic settling on its bare brown scalp, than behold all the splendours of this Indian landscape, for with all its dreamy luxuries, this is not *home;* and, dearest Lena, why should you all take root here?"

"Impossible! impossible!"

"Your father would wish to see you settled in marriage, as surely as he desires that you should, in life, survive him?"

Lena's tears were now falling very fast.

"I have long foreseen and dreaded this avowal," she began; "but I am very sensible of the honour you do me."

"Honour!—Oh, Lena, can you talk thus to me—to your own old Jack Harrower, who loves the very ground you tread on?"

"I repeat—honour," said Lena, gradually recovering her self-possession; "I deserted you in a manner that was cruel and heartless, I admit; all that you felt I was fated to feel, perhaps, in my turn. After encouraging you to hope——"

"After being solemnly engaged to me," interrupted Jack, gently putting her right.

"Well, after all that, I do not deserve your regard; and my heart, as I have said, is no longer my own."

Jack started as if a cobra had suddenly bitten the calf of his leg.

"Do you mean to say that it is *his?*" he asked, impetuously; "that man—Rudkin's?"

"No—far from it. I do not hate him—at least I hope not, for papa never ceases to tell us that we should never hate even those who wrong us, and despitefully use us; but be assured of this, that *I will never marry him*, even were it to save me from the most terrible death that Thugs could devise; neither can I marry you."

"And wherefore, Lena?"

"What would your chances be of happiness with a woman who has declared by her actions that she no longer loved you—that you had ceased to please her eye—her wretched wayward fancy?"

"Nay, Lena, you are over-sensitive—actually morbid in this view of yourself and of our unhappy affair. I forgive all and forget all, save that I loved you before Mark Rudkin came with his insidious tongue between us, and that I dearly love you still, and beseech you to be my wife."

"No, Jack, no. Friends we may be—nay, *must* be—the dearest and best of friends, but never husband—never wife. Hush! there is the sound of wheels! Papa and the girls have returned, and I hear Dicky Rivers laughing."

"I cannot face them all to-night, and that is flat," exclaimed Jack in a wild and excited manner. "Lena, you are driving me mad," he added, as he pressed his lips to her cheek, and rushed away.

He got his horse at the stables from the Doctor's syces, and full of many vague and conflicting thoughts, one moment vowing that he would never look upon her face again, and the next that he would return to the attack, and never—never abandon it—he galloped back to the cantonments, every way bewildered by the unsatisfactory nature of his long-sought-for interview with Lena Weston.

* * * * * *

Meanwhile, she was not quite satisfied with herself after he was gone.

She did not love Rudkin now, but the sight of his face and figure, and, more than all, the sound of his voice, had disturbed and excited a strange influence over her, filling her breast with emotions of a very mingled cast, in which anger was, perhaps, the strongest. The emotion of pique was scarcely favourable for Jack's passion; but for himself, she felt the purest esteem, the most kindly regard, and surely the simple-hearted and disinterested fellow well deserved them.

Had the Colonel not come so unexpectedly to Delhi, there is no knowing but that Jack might have won her consent after all,

especially as all her family—particularly Kate and Mellon too—were in his interest; and now, when it was all past and over, when Lena reviewed the whole interview, she felt, with humiliation, how immeasurably superior was the position of Harrower, as a lover, to her own.

"Is he sure," she thought, while Safiyah's nimble fingers braided away the masses of her dark hair for the night, "is Jack sure that it is love, and not obstinacy, which lures him after me still, for few men would forgive all that he has forgiven? Pride, and self-esteem, which is only another phase of pride, may not suffer him to desist, and the obstacles I offer may but serve to make the emotion a passion still. We know not whether love dies soonest under the cruelty or the kindness of one who is its object; any way, it cannot burn on for ever; but," continued the pretty casuist, "he must have some strange, wild hope of winning me yet, or his regard would have died out long ago. I have read, too, that the heart of man is such, that no sooner does he possess the object for which he has sighed, than he soon grows weary of it. Would Jack act thus, though?—I think not. Poor, dear Jack! his eyes had their old earnest and beautiful expression in them to-night," thought Lena, as Safiyah whisked the chowrie and drew the muslin mosquito curtain closely round the couch of her mistress.

It was not altogether that Lena Weston knew not her own mind; but, as some of her admissions to Harrower imported, that a morbid emotion of pride possessed her, and caused her to decline even the true and generous proffer of his old and unchanged regard.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STRANGLERS.

FOR two days after this Harrower never left the cantonments, but seemed to vegetate within the recesses of his bungalow.

On the evening of the second day subsequent to this unfortunate interview, Rowley Mellon was seen spurring his bay mare in hot haste towards the cantonments. What he had to communicate shall be related elsewhere; but meanwhile it must be recorded that among those who observed the heedless Mellon riding up the slope from Delhi, were some who could *not* be classed among his friends.

Prince Mirza Abubeker had said that Mellon should be taken care of, as stated in the close of our thirteenth chapter, and there were now upon his track certain men who fully meant to do so.

From a topc, or clump of mango trees that grew by the wayside, nearly a mile from the cantonment gate, four men were watching him with more of keen and fierce interest than good intent expressed in their black and glittering eyes, yet Rowley had never wronged one of them, and was perfectly unconscious of their existence here below.

These men were Baboo Bulli Sing, Gunga Rai—the naked Fakir,—and two other natives, one of whom was the havildar Pershad Sing, and the other a Hindoo sowar, or dragoon of low caste, apparently, and whose features expressed only cruelty and cunning.

Neither of the latter was in uniform.

All these men were members of that nearly, but not quite exterminated society, which was so long the terror of Hindostan, the Phansigars, or hereditary stranglers—the Thugs—a set of fanatical miscreants, to crush and destroy whom, the British Government gave all its energies, shortly before the Queen's accession, and whose mode of tracking, killing, and concealing their victims was so subtle and so carefully planned, that prior to 1835 they are alleged to have assassinated about fifteen hundred men annually.

Though the Thugs were all Hindoos originally, caste restrictions were removed, and then many Mohammedans joined them.

Baboo Sing and Pershad Sing had both become soldiers, and had consequeutly retired from the more lucrative busiuess of Thuggee; but they still knew all the code of secret signs, which, with a strange slang like that of the Gipsies, constituted a species of freemasonry, by which the members of this monstrous fraternity recognised each other, after a long and careful course of initiation by their parents.

Drawing the back of the hand across the chin, indicated the approach of a stranger; placing the hand over the mouth, and drawing it gently down, signified that danger was past; they made tracks for each other's guidance by strewing a few leaves on the wayside, by drawing a line in the dust, placing stones on each other, and by many other simple signals, which were revealed freely enough after our Government had caught and hanged a few hundreds of them. They have been known to follow, and even to travel for days, with the person they meant to slay, till an opportunity was given by chance, or, as they believed (though robbery was their chief motive), by the patroness of their order, Kalee, the Hindoo goddess of destruction—another form, it is believed, of the male idol, Seva.

She, they imagine, to have dwelt once on earth, inhabitiug the sixteen stupendous granite caves of Ellora, which lie near Dowlatabad, and the walls of which are covered with mystic sculptures, cut by the hands of demons, to record all the mysteries of Thuggee: on the opportunity being accorded, usually near some wild jungle or deep water-course, they strangled the victim with the roomal,

or noose, dug a hole with a pickaxe, and covered him up, face downwards, after gashing the body deeply under the armpits, to aid decomposition; through the mode of assassination adopted by them, they always abstained from shedding blood, and hence came much of the mystery that enveloped their crimes.

They deemed the instruments of death—the handkerchief and pickaxe—as holy; the latter was forged amid many absurd rites, washed with sugared brandy-and-water, and passed seven times through the flames, and with the roomal, properly noosed, was received with reverence by the Thug, from the hands of the priest, his tutor, who was entitled to all the coin found in the pockets of his first victim; hence, at the time alluded to, Gunga Rai was probably speculating on the amount of rupees that might be in the portmonnaie of poor Rowley Mellon.

The system pursued was not unlike that of garotting, in more enlightened parts of the world. "Whilst travelling along in friendly converse, two Thugs contrive to place themselves on each side of the traveller. One of them suddenly throws the noose over the neck of the victim, holding one end, while his accomplice grasps the other. A third, in readiness behind, seizes him by the legs; he is then thrown down and disabled, while the operation of the noose is aided by kicks in the most vital parts of the body. The sacred pickaxe is then called into play, and a hole, three feet deep, receives the victim, face downwards."

Persons of less doubtful character than Baboo Sing were members of this remarkable community, which had among its brotherhood such men as Dunraj Seth, the great Bombay banker, and his agent, Bearce Lall, who had in his office and about his person no less than twelve initiated Thugs. These, however, were sleeping partners, who merely vested money in the cause of murder and robbery, and did so with a coolness that may find a parallel to a certain extent in some of the great commercial rascalities of the western world.

In this awful trade did the Thugs rear their children and initiate their wives, reducing the whole horror to a system, a science, till by them murder came to be "considered as one of the Fine Arts," to quote the title of De Quincy's famous essay.

"Safe in the cantonments!" exclaimed Sergeant Pershad Sing, striking his hands together, as Mellon rode in, receiving a salute from a sentinel of the 54th N. I. at the gate.

"Yes—safe by the nine forms of Vishnu!" added Gunga Rai, whose eyes glared through the uncombed masses of his hair, as he drew (but with difficulty, for his nails, that had never known trimming, were like the shells of a razor-fish) from his dirty cummerbund, or shawl, that was twisted round his middle, and formed his only garment, the *roomal*, or slip-knot handkerchief, and gave it to Pershad Sing, who knelt down to receive it; "he is safe yonder, and cannot leave unseen by us, if we but stay long enough. May Kalee vouchsafe her aid and support to you, and

may she and you remember in the moment of sacrifice how many of your forefathers signalised themselves by the use of THIS, and by their courage and conduct in her service, and for her glory. But she does not forget it, for have not her signs and auguries been most auspicious? We are a poor, crushed, and degraded community now; once we who could number our men by thousands, now cannot do so even by scores, and even these are old, feeble-handed, and faint of heart. Why is this? neglect of the observances of religion; all manner of men were made Thugs, and all manner of men were killed, without consideration of whether their touch in death made our hands unclean, so Kalee began to forget us, when we forgot her; but amid solemn prayer I have seen her, and heard the whispers of her voice, and be assured, oh Pershad Sing, and thou too, Shumshoodeen Khan, that the omens are of success for the coming sacrifice, and this man shall die, as others have died, for the glory of the goddess, who dwells unseen amid the rock-hewn temples of Ellora."

During this rhapsody Pershad Sing pressed the handkerchief to his forehead, and then concealed it in his breast.

To Shumshoodeen Khan the Fakir delivered the small sharp pickaxe, which had been concealed in the root of an old mango tree till required for use (though a holy well was the usual repository), and this benighted wretch kissed it, and prostrated himself before it, grovelling on his face among the grass.

The Hindoo trooper was a deserter from the Oude Irregulars. He was a powerfully built man, of savage aspect; his head was small, but exhibited all the phrenological peculiarities which distinguish the skull of the Thug proper—a thirst for blood, large animal organs, and a destitution of all moral sentiments. Public taste is usually in favour of a nose, but this personage could not boast of any such ornament. A sabre cut at Ferozeshah had sliced it clean off, hence his brown, leather visage was perfectly flat. His mouth was like that of a skate, and he had two wild and gleaming eyes, to which the muscular mutilation below lent a glare that was perfectly satanic.

"Need I remind you that Brahma is Brahma?" said the Fakir, lifting up his hands, when the trooper rose from the grass; "the great and incomprehensible being who has existed from all eternity—the *Creator*, *Preserver*, and *Destroyer*—these *are*—that *is* Brahma, Vishnu and Seva, whom we Thugs adore as Kalee. All we behold, and touch, and eat, drink or feel, are portions of Brahma—they are the souls of gods and men who have lived and died, and shall live and die again and again. Individuality is an illusion—a detached emanation of the vast universal soul, which man forgets in his separate state—that he is but a spark of the divinity, and that at death he is to be absorbed, as this night yonder pale Feringhee shall be."

"Let us adore," prayed the Fakir, "the supremacy of the Divine Sun—the godhead who illuminates all, who reproduces all,

from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understandings aright in our progress towards his holy seat."

So, to serve their own ends, the Fakirs of the Western world can cant quite as well as their dancing brethren of the East; but as this was a portion of the Hindoo prayer to an idol, Baboo Sing, as a Mohammedan, had some trouble in concealing his annoyance, and spat several times on the grass.

"Shumshoodeen Khan and Havildar Pershad Sing, you understand all now," said he, impatiently, as he threw his splendid sabre under his left arm; "Mellon Sahib means to marry a girl who is destined for the zenana of Mirza Mogul in the great time that is coming—so that marriage must not take place—you comprehend."

"All that matters little to us, if Kalee prove favourable and a sacrifice be achieved," said Pershad Sing with perfect solemnity.

"I hope he will not leave the cantonments till evening has closed," remarked Shumshoodeen Khan, whose voice sounded as if he spoke from the inside of a barrel.

"Why?"

"Why, havildar, do you speak with the tongue of a fool?" was the rough rejoinder; "is not the way to Delhi open and full of people; and the great Lord Judge, Leslie Sahib, with his chowkeydars* would make quick work with us, if we were found working thus—even in the service of Kalee."

Gunga Rai ground his teeth and said,—

"The chowkeydars are with us to a man! But when the King of Roum, the Sultan of Egypt and Soubadar Major Napoleon, with the troops from Nepaul and those from Gwalior, where the grave of Sufi lies, come altogether, to the rescue of Delhi and Oude, we too shall make quick work with the accursed Feringhees. It matters little—is it not written on our foreheads and in the air, that the *raj*, the rule of the Company, will soon die, and with it the last of the Christians?"

"Yes, and of Jews, Fire-worshippers, and Armenians—the curse of Brahma on them all!" added the sepoy sergeant, spitting on the grass at the name of each. The words of the speaker inflamed him, for it was such half insane and wholly cunning wanderers as the dervish Falladeen and the fakir Gunga Rai who constituted themselves the uncommissioned chaplains of the sepoy troops, and were the most ardent promoters of the mutiny, though the brand of discord was first lighted by some of the Bible-distributing missionaries and evangelising meddlers from a certain part of Christendom.

"Aha!" said Gunga Rai, showing a very sharklike row of teeth, "what will the Lord Sahib Bahadoor (the Governor General) say when the bomb of destruction bursts above his

* Native policemen.

head? He will then know that the goddess of time, whose temple at Calcutta he and his people have defiled by their presence, is about to be avenged."

Leaving the Fakir and his brother stranglers in the thicket, Baboo Sing, who grew rather weary of all this, mounted his horse and rode off to the palace to report progress.

Meanwhile the evening stole on, and Mellon Sahib did not seem to be in any hurry to leave the cantonments, for at that very time he was enjoying a quiet weed and a glass of bitter beer, with his legs under Jack Harrower's mahogany.

Concealed among the long rank grass of the mango tope the three lurkers watched the gate of the camp; but though many passed out and in, the rider on the bay mare was not one of the number.

"Might he have left by another gate?" surmised Shumshoodeen Khan.

That was not likely, as he would have to return to Delhi, was the reply of the Fakir. Ere long the sun was in the west, and the shadows of the mango tope fell far across the road. The three lurkers remained patient and silent, and smoked by turns a hubble-bubble made of a hollowed cocoa-nut.

They had arranged their plan, which was very simple. If the darkness suited, Shumshoodeen Khan was to address a question to Rowley Mellon, who would stoop from his horse to listen; Pershad Sing was then to cast the roomal over his head, and drag him from his horse into the mango tope, when the holy pickaxe would soon do the rest.

To while away the time, Gunga Rai told them the true legend of Thuggee, as it is carved in stone on the walls of rock at Dowlatabad.

"In remote and unknown ages, the world was oppressed by a gigantic and terrific demon, as the sculptures record in the sixteen temples of Ellora, for thus at our Kailasa (paradise) are recorded all the secrets of Thuggee.

"Then came Kalee, the goddess of destruction, another form of Seva, god of terror and reproduction, who dwells amid eternal snows on the summit of the highest of the Himalayas. Oh! Brahma, Vishnu and Seva! Three in one, coeval and unlimited in power!

"To rescue the human race, Kalee cut down the demon with her sword, but from the blood of his wounds sprang others, each more terrible than himself. Thereupon Kalee created two men, to each of whom she gave a noosed handkerchief—the sacred roomal—and taught them how to strangle therewith the whole brood of fiends, without spilling one drop of their magic blood. So thus were they destroyed, as the granite carvings tell us, and when the two men offered back the handkerchiefs to Kalee, she said—

"'Keep them, my children, and to serve me, strangle men, even as ye have hitherto strangled demons.'

"So those two went forth into the world as Thugs, and were accompanied for a time by Kalee in person, for she offered to conceal the strangled on condition that none were to observe her. But curiosity is a powerful passion, and one on looking back saw her devouring a Parsee, which so displeased her that she left to them the peril of concealing the victims themselves: hence the mutilation by the pickaxe, and burying them face downward, as this Feringhee Mellon shall lie here to-night.

"Such was the origin of Thuggee. Yet *we* do not do the deed; it is fate, and fate is Kalee, for serving whom in this world Bramah will not punish, but rather reward us in the next."

Poor Kate Weston is expecting Mellon for a moonlight walk in the garden ere they separate for the night; lovers have so much to talk about—the future is all before them, and it seems one of endless joy.

The moon was shining over Delhi, and Kate lingered on the same terrace where Harrower and Lena met, watching and listening: she heard the bells beating in the cantonment and the boom of an occasional gong rise above the city hum, but there was no sound of Mellon's bay mare galloping along the roadway that led to her father's mansion.

So the hours of evening stole on, and night ere long was at hand.

CHAPTER XVII.

MELLON'S NEWS.

PARADES were over for the day; the evening—the cool, the delicious, the longed for evening—was at hand; but no brother officer dropped in upon him to disturb the current of his reflections, or join him in the invariable "weed:" so Jack Harrower sat moodily in his quarters alone, thinking over his futile interview with Lena—that interview so long sought for and so carefully considered.

Philoctetes, the son of Pœan, on his lonely isle of Lemnos, with the serpent bite in his foot, was happier, perhaps, than plain honest Jack Harrower, whose rankling sore was in his manly and generous English heart.

He thought over all she had said, and he grew more bewildered.

"She must love that man," he muttered; "she admitted, at all events, that she did *not* hate him—a doubtful admission that—deuced doubtful; but added that she would never marry him, and that her heart was not her own; then who the devil has it?"

He feared that he had left many things unsaid, or that he had said things that were better omitted. Had he not told her again and again that he loved and worshipped her; and what more could be said by mortal man? But she would never marry *him* or any one else. She was intensely unreasonable!

"Shall I try my luck again, like a desperate gamester, or give the matter up?" thought he.

Lena's voice and eye had proved too powerful for his resolution; even when she sought to repel him, and make him abandon the pursuit, he felt more than ever attracted towards her.

He sat under the verandah of his bungalow, with the punkah-driver asleep in a corner, and some wine, unheeded, on a table at hand. His eyes were fixed on vacancy, yet he would see, in fancy, Lena's pale face and soft expression; and silently in his heart he vowed that he would love her still. This he could do, all the more conscientiously that she had pledged herself not only *not* to become the wife of Rudkin, but also never to marry at all!

At her years, and with all her beauty, and the brilliant offers certain to be made her in India, would she keep that singular pledge?

He was certain that she would, and he should be constant to her. If she did not marry neither would he; but he should remain a bachelor, stick to his profession, and redouble the interest he felt in the welfare, honour, and glory of the Cornish Light Infantry.

But he knew that he ought also to avoid her, and get out of Delhi: his peace of mind required it. He would correspond with Kate and Polly, and he would thus hear of her welfare, her health, and happiness; but he would cross her path no more—no, not until the hair of both had become blanched by time—not until she was long past her fortieth year, which Balzac considered the loveliest period of womanhood; until his moustache had a decided pepper and salt hue, and then perhaps his love would have chilled down, or worn away; for, as Jean Jacques Rousseau has it, there never was, since the world began, a pair of grey-haired lovers who sighed for each other; and so this state of matters might all come to pass, if God spared them, when she was a shrivelled old maid and he a gouty old fellow, creeping slowly up the list of general officers.

Jack had just nursed himself into this rather unphilosophical and very melancholy, or as he mentally phrased it, "d—ned stupid," mood of mind, when he heard the sound of hoofs in his stable quarter, and then of footsteps, as Rowley Mellon, his

face radiant with smiles, came hurrying along under the verandah.

"Hallo, Jack! what's up? You look as moody as if the first grey hair had made its appearance in that remarkably killing moustache of yours, as Polly Weston calls it."

"*You* seem in wonderful spirits, anyway, Rowley," grumbled Harrower; "is the favourite horse scratched at Calcutta, or what?"

"Wonderful spirits? I should think so, and deuced good reason therefore, old fellow," said Mellon, throwing his sword on a sofa and dragging a chair outside, whereon he languidly seated himself; "I have such news for you, Jack; I have galloped from the Cashmere Gate in six minutes, two seconds, and a fraction."

"Then have a glass of wine and a biscuit, Rowley; it is all there—help yourself," said Harrower, whose heart began to flutter; had Lena relented?

"Thanks, Jack; what is this, Madeira?"

"Not a bad guess; no, it is Cabul wine; I got it from a Parsee, in Chandney Choke; the flavour is nearly the same; but, as usual, I see that confounded Pandy has left the ice-pail empty."

"It is excellent, and I'm dying of thirst; grief is a thirsty emotion, and I suppose that happiness is so too. I passed the Leslie girls as I came along; they were driving a couple of Cabul ponies in a phaeton, with the kitmutgar behind. I don't like ladies driving; it develops the biceps, hardens the soft hand, and gives a knowing twinkle to the eye; besides, it does make the natives stare a bit!"

"Surely it was not to tell me this that you came from Delhi, with your bay mare over foam?"

"No—but to be congratulated, old fellow."

"On what—promotion—staff appointment—eh?"

"Something better still."

"How—what?"

"My approaching marriage."

"Whew," whistled Harrower.

"Kate and I have settled everything—quick work, isn't it, Jack?"

"So soon—you surely don't mean it?" asked Harrower, his fine, open face growing really bright.

"But we *do* mean it, rather," said Rowley, dragging his long fair whiskers.

"Then I heartily congratulate you, Rowley, for Kate Weston is a dear, good girl—quite as good as she is handsome, and I love her like a sister."

"She is a genuine duck, Jack!"

"When does the affair come off?"

"By the end of the week."

"Sharp work! how did it all come about? By the way, I haven't seen you for two days."

"That is the reason, Jack; I've been up to the eyes in business, legal, matrimonial, and monetary."

"The last element is a good one, certainly."

"Decidedly so. My uncle has come down handsomely, and wishes, for he is in very bad health, that we should get married at once, and run down to Calcutta to see him, ere it be too late. I have seen the Brigadier—old Graves is a trump! and he agrees that I leave the company, in charge of Pat Doyle, for six months, when we shall come up country again to live with the Westons until we can look about us, whatever that may mean; so you see, we have no time to lose."

"That is pretty evident."

"You'll be groomsman, of course, old boy."

"Well—I suppose—most happy—but," stammered Harrower, "Lena will be bridesmaid."

"Of course, and wear green garters," said Rowley, with a laugh that made Harrower wince; "she will be one of the six, all dazzling creatures, floating amid billows of white muslin. My uncle in the Opium Department was seized suddenly by a fit of phil—phil——"

"Philoprogenitiveness," suggested Harrower.

"Not at all—how you talk, Jack; with great philanthropy: he has made solid arrangements with Dr. Weston. Apart from the three thousand a year in India Stock, secured to me when he departs to a better world (God bless him!), he has cleared off my dippings with the cursed loan bank, and repaid the three thousand rupees I owed to the Agra."

"You are a lucky fellow—but deserve it all, Mellon."

"Thanks, Jack; and in return I wish you all success in the same way."

"And may continue to do so in vain," replied the other, moodily.

"Come—don't sigh like a Corydon—how was it we used to render Virgil—

> "'Young Corydon, a hapless shepherd swain,
> The fair Alexis loved, but sighed in vain;
> And underneath the leafy trees, alone,
> Thus to the woods and valleys made his moan.'"

"Don't jest with me, Rowley. For some time past I have felt exactly like a fellow detailed for a forlorn hope, who eats and drinks the last rag of his kit and penny of his pay, if there be time to do so, and who cares not a dump how the world wags, as it will all end in lead pills and saltpetre, in a few hours."

"A pleasant state of mind, Jack," said Rowley, draining his glass.

"And all about a girl, too!" added Harrower, doing the same.

"I never was detailed for a forlorn hope, and so don't exactly know what you mean," said Mellon, pouring out a bumper of the light Cabul wine; "but I heard all about your interview with Lena on the terrace the other night."

"The deuce you did!" said Harrower, with some irritation.

"Every word."

"From her?"

"No—that was not likely."

"How then—how?"

"Simply enough; Lena told Kate—sisters of course have no secrets from each other; so Kate told me (as *we* have no secrets from each other), and added that she has lost all patience with Lena, whose excuses are absurd, and without a leg to stand on."

"Well, perhaps so, Rowley; but be assured that she shall never again be asked by—yours truly, John Trevanion Harrower," said that personage, emphatically.

"Nonsense; a man in love only wants encouragement—so consider yourself sufficiently encouraged. Go ahead again, I say, and you'll win at a canter."

"I've smoked two hookahs and a handful of havannahs over the matter, and my mind is made up."

"For what?"

"Quitting Delhi, if I can."

"But not before my little affair comes off."

"Of course not; but I shall sell or exchange, if I can do nothing else. You must be aware of this, Rowley. If Lena doesn't know her own mind now, she will never know it."

"I'd bet a bag of mohurs—ay, a whole monkey in mohurs—that if you ask her a third time, she will have you. 'There's luck in odd numbers,' as the song says."

"When I do ask her again, you shall win your bet, Mellon," was the dogged reply.

"You old Cornish folks have a dash of the obstinate in your tempers; but only think, she'll look killing as a bridesmaid, and then the occasion and the costume are so suggestive, that your pride will have a fall, Jack."

"Then I shan't go," said Harrower, still more doggedly, as he rocked to and fro on his chair.

"But you shall go," persisted Mellon, mimicking his tone, which made Harrower laugh; "and you must make a speech at the luncheon—wish us joy in a bumper—that we may grow healthy, wealthy, and wise, and that like all wedded couples in the old story-books, we may 'live happily all the days of our lives.'"

"You'll stay, Rowley, and dine with me this evening, at all events. Temple and I are honorary members of the 54th mess,

but to-night I would rather have something quietly with yourself."

"With pleasure, old fellow."

"And now to look up that rascal Ferukh Pandy. The fellow spends half his time with the dervish Falladeen at the gate, and the other half in chaffering with dealers and ruining me in dustoorie."*

So Rowley Mellon, all unaware of the watchers in the mango tope, and of others of greater rank, who took a lively interest in his movements, remained in the cantonments, and had a plain dish of curried lamb and rice, with a bottle of iced Cabul wine, in Harrower's bungalow; and while conversing pleasantly of his approaching change in life, and all his future plans, the amber-tinted evening stole away, and the purple shadows grew long and deep, by the city wall, the sandy plain, and the river side.

"We've been getting up no end of fallals in the trousseau way already," said Rowley, as they lingered over their wine in the cool and shady verandah. "All Chandney Choke has been ransacked, and everything ordered by double dozens and more, on the shortest notice; then there are shawls, bonnets, gloves—white, lavender, and straw-coloured; cuffs, collars, and chemisettes; by Jove, we would need a couple of commissariat elephants or the bullocks of a gun battery to carry it all! The amount of rubbish required by those dear creatures when about to enter the holy state of matrimony is really astonishing."

"Fire away, Rowley, it does one good to hear you. They don't mean to invite Rudkin, I hope."

"I should think not! How can you fancy such a thing? Pass over that Cawnpore case of cigars—thanks."

"One never knows what odd things may happen nowadays," was Jack's sour response; "pass the wine, Rowley.—Rudkin! I hated that fellow in a most unchristian fashion before I saw him here, up-country, and I have hated him more cordially since; and I've had good reason, Rowley Mellon—good reason!"

(Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Rudkin was fated, however, to be present at Kate's marriage, though the speakers could little foresee in what guise or capacity!)

"Take courage, I say, Jack; as for Lena not leaving the dear old governor, it is to be hoped she will get over that notion, as she got over teething and the measles. It is very amiable, and all that sort of thing, no doubt, but when carried too far may become very absurd."

"Europeans can't keep all their women-folk about them as the sepoys do; fellows who consider their matrimonial arrangements incomplete unless their ladies go like bottled wine—twelve to the dozen—or rather like thirteen to the dozen."

* Share of all purchase-money, taken in secret from all dealers by native servants.

"Only fancy the marital lot of a true believer, with a dozen of darkies, and all their naked imps, when the route comes for a distant station."

"But to return to the subject, Mellon. Lena Weston is a most mysterious female—a sphynx—an enigma."

"I know that since landing in India she has refused no end of fellows—Artillerymen at Dumdum—Fusileers of ours at Barrackpore—Queen's Dragoon Guardsmen at Allahabad, and Civil Service men too—'first chop,' so far as rupees go, and position also—for as you know that here, we red-coats are considered among prudent mammas as only a *dernier ressort*, or 'second chop,' for marriageable daughters; so all these refusals must be flattering to you, Jack."

"Or to Rudkin."

"Oh—oh, Jack!"

"He has more money than I, and no doubt his life is insured for double its real value."

"Now you are beginning to growl again, and I shall be off. I breakfast at seven to-morrow morning with the Westons in the verandah, after parade, so good night, Jack; I'll look you up some time to-morrow, if Kate can spare me. Ferukh, tell the syce to take my horse to the mainguard gate—I'll meet it there."

After Mellon had left Harrower, considering the scheme that was laid for him, it was a fortunate thing that he lingered on his way to the gate of the cantonments, instead of riding forth at once alone.

Vishnu, Kalee, and Co. had not foreseen the temptations which might induce the happy young lieutenant of the Bengal Fusileers to linger.

In the moonlight he paused to look at some Natch girls, then on a tour through the Upper Provinces, and who were now dancing prettily before the large open windows of the mess bungalow of the 38th Native Infantry; and these graceful creatures, in their half-transparent Persian trousers, gathered at their taper ankles by bangles of gold, at which small bells were tinkling; their jamas of wrought muslin or silver tissue, which showed their slender waists and fully-developed busts, their black hair hanging down in long and spiral curls, their soft, musical voices, their Indian grace and suppleness, made them seem altogether a most attractive group, as they danced to the music of their own song, and the tap of their tambourines, amid the silver splendour of that beautiful night.

Mellon seated himself on the sill of a window for a minute, with one leg inside the mess-room and another outside. Alternately he looked at the dancing girls, wreathed in whirling mazes, and conversed with some of the 38th officers, who pressed him to join them; but he remembered his engagement with Kate, and said:

"Who's for Delhi—any of you fellows going townward? I'm just about to ride home."

"I," cried Willoughby, who was on the staff.

"And I," added Eversly, of the 54th, as they started up to accompany him.

"Now this is too bad," said a 38th man; "Eversly wants to hook it, because the salt-and-water for those who won't sing in turn, stands before him, and quite untasted too."

"And likely to remain so," replied Eversly, as he vaulted through a window, escaping the grasp of some laughing friends, who sought to seize him.

So the three mounted, and rode forth together, passing close by the group of mango trees, where the lurking stranglers, baffled by this unexpected companionship, lay among the long grass, with their noosed handkerchief and sacred pickaxe.

Kalee—or fate—had deprived them of their opportunity, but another might yet occur, ere the waning of the moon.

The moment the three officers left the tope behind, with their horses at an easy walk, and all conversing gaily, the three Thugs, still bent on their deadly purpose, crept forth, and gliding on like shadows in the moonlight, followed them towards the city.

They saw Mellon separate from Eversly and Willoughby, not far from the palace gate; they followed him quickly as he trotted through the town, but were unable to come up with him before he reached Dr. Weston's house; they watched his meeting with Kate on the terrace—one of those freedoms of action accorded to a Christian woman, which excited wonder and contempt in their Oriental minds; they lingered till he came forth, and re-mounting his horse, rode to his residence or lodgings, in the city; and they dogged him closely, step for step.

Amid the blaze of the moon in Chandney Choke, nothing in their fatal way could be achieved; but they knew well the geography of his house, and when and where the sahib would be asleep; for many times had the havildar been there on military duty, and many times, too, had the fakir begged for alms of poor Mellon, and seldom been sent away empty-handed.

Rowley neither heard nor saw them, those three dark, gliding figures. Kate's last kiss and her parting words were something to ponder on, and to dream of; and before his eyes were only floating visions of a blooming bride in white, of wedding-rings and favours, cake and congratulations, of white kids and iced champagne; of a short but delicious voyage down the Ganges to Allahabad, and from thence by rail, perhaps to Calcutta; and to a honeymoon spent in a splendid villa at Garden Reach; and to himself, he kept whispering soft things of the sweet girl who was to be the partner of his fortune, and "the sewer on of his shirt buttons," as Dicky Rivers had said.

So amid such dreams of elysium, he could little conceive the interest felt in his affairs by Brahma, Seva, and Vishnu, and by the Messieurs Gunga Rai, Pershad Sing, and the nosceless Shumshoodeen Khan.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE THUGS SUCCEEDED.

THE night was close and sultry; thus the atmosphere, combined with Harrower's Cabul wine, made Mellon unusually drowsy.

He had apartments in the city, let him by Mohassan Jamsetjee, a Parsee cloth merchant, whose booth was in the adjacent bazaar. He preferred living thus to being in the cantonment, as it was nearer the house of the Westons. A double verandah surrounded the Parsee's dwelling; the first to shade the windows on the entrance floor, and the second, or upper, to serve the same purpose for those on the floor above.

The havildar knew the locality of Mellon's sleeping apartment intimately, having often brought him notes and orders from Colonel Ripley, Eversly, and others while he was yet abed; and now, when the Venetian blinds were lowered (and the wax-lights extinguished), though the windows were left partially open for air and coolness, with a grin at his two companions, he pointed out the place where their victim lay.

It was, indeed, strange that, after an intimate intercourse with India for nearly two hundred years, the British should have been so long in perfect ignorance of the existence of a secret society whose objects were so horrible. Even when Seringapatam was stormed in 1799, we knew nothing of the Thugs. Slaughter was their creed, but there were certain persons exempt, as it was deemed unlucky to assassinate them, and these were water-carriers, musicians, smiths, vendors of oil, and the maimed.

At the hour those three men now lingered in the street it was silent and deserted; all persons in Delhi were within doors; a houseless dog baying at the sailing moon, or a filthy jackal howling in some thicket or garden shrubbery, alone broke the stillness of the night. One side of the long and vast street, the vista of which was terminated by the dome and spires of the palace, was bathed a clear, bright blaze of liquid sheen, and the other was sunk in black obscurity; even the silver light and sombre shadow were each in its degree intense.

The wall of the house on the side where Mellon slept was involved in this species of opaque shadow, and it facilitated the operations of the Thugs, who, after waiting a certain time, began the attempt. Pershad Sing had the fatal roomal stuffed into the breast of his chief garment, a species of cotton tunic, or white shirt, which was girt at the waist by a red sash, or shawl, and assisted by the brawny shoulders of Shumshoodeen Khan, he proceeded at once to ascend a pillar of the verandah.

But prior to this, there occurred an incident which rather disconcerted them. As Shumshoodeen handed to the fakir the pickaxe, it dropped from his hand!

When such a thing happened, Thugs were invariably panic-stricken; it was regarded as an evil omen, as betokening the death, within the year, of the man who dropped it, and disasters to the whole fraternity, who viewed themselves as doomed men, and even to have lost their caste.

With a vigorous effort Pershad clutched a leaden spout that ran round the verandah, and agilely writhing himself up, reached the roof thereof, and then gave a hand to Shumshoodeen Khan. He, in turn, was assisted by the naked fakir, who kept watch in the street, and then the two while crawling along the verandah, slowly, softly, and silently as a couple of slimy reptiles, kept themselves perfectly concealed from every chance observer, till they reached the nearest of the three windows of Mellon's apartment.

After giving a last glance at Gunga Rai, on whose bronze-like figure the silver moonlight was streaming, they became more confident, for he placed his right hand over his mouth and drew it gently down towards his breast, the Thug sign that no danger was nigh, so they crept up to the window.

Rowley had long since retired to-bed, and had tucked the fine muslin mosquito curtains closely round him. His room was lofty and nearly involved in shadow, yet, by the faint rays of the night-lamp, which burned on a little marble tripod table, his figure could be distinctly seen as he lay on, but not in, the bed, clad in his silk shirt and long linen drawers, which had feet like stockings, all in one piece, the approved Indian fashion.

He was perfectly quiet and still, breathing regularly, with a pleasant smile on his lips, for perhaps he was already dreaming of the blooming Kate in her white bridal bonnet, or of the last kiss her soft lips had given him.

The night-light, though feeble, enabled the two whose dark and ominous visages and cruel, gleaming eyes appeared at the sill of the window, when they softly and silently raised a portion of the Venetian blind, to see their way in, and arrange the mode in which their operations were to be pursued.

Mellon gave an alarming start at that moment, as if about to

awake; the intruders never stirred, so he dozed off to quiet sleep again, as they thought without being heard or seen.

His night-light was a handsome affair, being a crystal vase of exquisite form, with water in its bulb, the oil above that, and the light floating daintily therein. Poor Jack Harrower, in his dingy regimental bungalow, contented himself with a piece of wick stuck through a cork, in a common tumbler; but then Rowley had the elegant Kate already to look after his little wants, and to soften the asperities of his single life, for the Weston girls came at times, to the great wonder, and even horror, of the old Parsee merchant, and tumbled all Rowley's rooms about, as young ladies often will do when let loose on a bachelor's premises; and thus the very lamp which enabled the assassins to take their plans, was a birthday gift from his intended.

Shumshoodeen Khan had left, as we have said, the sacred pickaxe with the fakir, for they knew that unless they could bring the body forth, toss it over the verandah, and bury it face downward in the shrubbery of the Gueber's garden, the implement would be useless, and he could but aid in pulling the noose, and to strangle a sleeper was wont to be the work of the novice, the pupil, the mere boy Thug, during his initiation.

First Pershad Sing, and then he, each softly and silently as cats, for they were barefoot, made their way under the Venetian blind into the apartment, and crept along the matting which covered the floor.

As usual in India, the door of the room stood open, its place being supplied by a curtain, as privacy is always secondary to air and coolness; but the circumstance made little difference to the Thugs, for if once the fatal noose was adjusted, they had no fear of Mellon uttering the faintest cry or sound to cause alarm.

Old experience and early teaching had made them too perfect in their fearful work for that to ensue.

And now one was on each side of poor Rowley Mellon's bed. Had he been awake he must have seen with astonishment those two figures, ghastly and ill-defined, through the vapour-like muslin curtains, as their hands tried to undo them and approach his head, over which he singularly enough, and fortunately for himself, placed his right hand and arm, effectually precluding, as he lay on his left side, the use of the long silk handkerchief which Pershad Sing had now drawn from his breast, and held ready for use.

There was a pause, and through the double curtains which separated them Pershad could see Shumshoodeen Khan passing a hand across his chin, signifying "danger," so he drew back. Shumshoodeen then introduced his hand under the fragile curtains, and touched Mellon's right cheek with the tip of a finger, softly and lightly as a fly would have done; but he did not stir. Then with a finger-nail, sharpened for the purpose, he slightly

pricked him in the same place, producing the sensation of a mosquito bite.

Still the Sahih never moved!

A third time they tried by similar arts to make him turn his head or move his arm, but in vain.

The two Thugs were baffled, for their usual arts proved unavailing. Approaching the foot of the bed, they were about to tickle the soles of Mellon's feet, when there was a double explosion—bang! bang! went two pistol shots; the bed was full of smoke, and Shumshoodeen Khan felt the crown of his head scorched, as if by a hot poker, for a ball had traversed the skin.

Though they could never have conceived it possible, Mellon had been perfectly awake all the time. A cool-headed and wary young Englishman, while boiling with anger, and not without a sufficient emotion of alarm, he had seen them enter, and, thinking they were simply native thieves, had been quietly watching them, and feigning to sleep; but the hand that was over his head, and which had baffled them, held actually in its grasp a loaded revolver.

With a shout of rage and alarm, Pershad Sing sprang through the window and vanished, carrying a great portion of a blind with him. Half-sightless by blood, and maddened by fury, the bulkier Shumshoodeen Khan was less active in his movements, and while Mellon was undoing his muslin curtains, and springing from bed, he heard him shouting as he was sliding over the verandah,

"White brute and pariah! You call me yellow nigger—ha! ha! Infidel, Feringhee and slave of a begum, who greases cartridges with the fat of pig!"

Kalee had abandoned them; the fall of the sacred pickaxe was ominously indicative of that.

When Mellon, pistol in hand, looked into the street, all was silent and still, and not a human figure, or even the shadow of one, could be seen in the far-stretching moonlit vista of Chandney Choke. His two recent visitors were running as fast as they could in search of the first water-tank or well wherein to bathe and purify themselves from the contamination of having touched him; for amid their crimes, those men never forgot their religious mummery; but when compared with Gunga Rai, the old dervish Hafiz Falladeen was a pious clergyman of sterling character.

Not a vestige of Mellon's property was touched; even his watch, studs, rings and purse, which lay on the toilet table, had all escaped, so he became unpleasantly convinced—although he never thought of Thugs, as it was supposed that such wretches had been effectually suppressed during Lord William Bentinck's administration—that his life, and *not* plunder, had been the primary objects of his midnight visitors. But to Mellon's English

notions this seemed too incredible; whom had he wronged, and who on the whole face of the earth could have the slightest interest or object to gain by such a transaction?

The idea banished sleep for a considerable time, all the more that the pistol shots had roused the old fire-worshipper, who came in great terror clad in his long gown and conical hat, topping a face coloured like an over-ripe plum, and fresh from among the ladies of his zenana, to learn what all the row was about. Rowley re-loaded the revolver, and blessed his stars for the forethought which for some time past had caused him to keep that useful implement under his pillow; and at the risk of being stifled, for his room was hot as that famous Black Hole at Calcutta (for which the traveller may now look in vain), he closed and secured his street windows for that night, and resolved to do so in future—at least, until he and Kate, a wedded pair, turned their backs on Delhi.

When the baffled wretches reported the failure of their attempt to Baboo Bulli Sing, he, as a Thug retired from business, only expressed his astonishment that, after so bad an omen as the pickaxe falling to the ground, they could expect to have fared otherwise.

"However," he added, "it matters little; in a few days we shall have glorious news from Meerut, Agra, and Cawnpore."

He was a genuine Mohammedan, yet it is a curious fact in the history of those stranglers, that Kalee, though a goddess of Brahminical idolatry, was held in equal reverence by the Moslem and Hindoo Thugs, though the former must have had some difficulty in reconciling her horrible precepts to the tenor and spirit of the Koran and the Prophet.

"We must *never* kill," said a Mohammedan Thug who was once captured by the authorities, "unless the omens are favourable, and such favourable omens we consider as the mandates of the Deity."

On detailing the adventures of the night to Mohassan Jamsetjee, the old Parsee cloth-merchant, that little personage rather startled Rowley Mellon by announcing that from their mode of procedure, his nocturnal visitors were undoubtedly Thugs! He knew the nature of the miscreants well, and some years before had nearly fallen—as each of his three sons did—a victim to their cruelty.

His statement was this, and it certainly affords outline enough for a very terrible story, did we care to write it.

In addition to those Thugs who plied their lucrative vocation on land, were others who did so by water. Those fellows assumed the garb and guise of boatmen; they wore the whitest of turbans, the most spotless of cummerbunds; they had the most suave, happy, and pleasant manners; they had the cleanest and most gaudy of boats, and usually plied as ferrymen at the ghauts or

landing-places of the most considerable towns on the Indus, the Jumna, and the Ganges.

Some of their confederates, carrying mails, bales, trunks, and portmanteaus, pretended to be travellers as they assembled at the ghaut, and in this character lured others, who were really so, on board, and once there—all was over!

With his three boys, the Parsee was once proceeding to Agra with a great stock of Cashmere shawls, fine muslins, and cherry pipe-sticks, for sale, and with his bales on a hired elephant, he drew near to the famous ghaut at Etawah, which stands on the north-east side of the Jumna, fifty-two miles from Agra, and eighty-six from Cawnpore. On the road he met several jovial way-farers, proceeding to the same place. They were very kind; they shared their food with him; one carried his youngest son, who was footsore and weary, and all urged that he should take a passage with them in a clean and pretty boat which they selected, offering to share the expense with him.

To this he gladly assented, being always pleased to save even an anna in the way of business: so they readily assisted him to get his three boys and all his valuable bales conveyed on board. Other passengers, all of whom seemed, after a time, to know each other, and to know the boatmen too, came to join the party. The sails were spread, the oars were shipped, and the ghaut of Etawah, the most beautiful on the Jumna, with all its new villas, canton-ments, and the crumbling palaces of the Omrahs, or old grandees of the Mogul dynasty, had receded far and fast astern, before the horror-stricken disciple of Zoroaster discovered that he, and his three poor sinless boys, had been lured to destruction, and that the entire company on board were—Thugs!

Twice, in his desperation and despair, he dragged the fatal roomal from his throat, and in writhing himself out of their hands, fell into the water, and diving, escaped the pistol bullets and other missiles which they sent after him. Some long weeds concealed him and he got ashore; but long before that his three boys had been destroyed in the usual way, being strangled, stripped, and having their spines broken with the pickaxe, to prevent resuscitation.

They were then flung into the river, and he saw them float past his hiding-place in the star-light, while the Thug boatmen, with their plunder, bore on to the next ghaut in search of new victims.

For many a day and night after this night's adventure, the loaded revolver was never very far from the hand of Rowley Mellon.

CHAPTER XIX.

LENA RECEIVES ANOTHER PROPOSAL.

ON the evening subsequent to Mellon's unpleasant, nocturnal episode, Lena Weston was seated in the inner drawing-room, alone, at her desk, writing some notes to friends and others, concerning the approaching marriage of her sister, when Colonel Rudkin's card was brought her, on a silver salver, by the kitmutgar, Assim Alee, who simply announced in his guttural voice:—

"Ek sahib" (a gentleman).

To retire from the room was her first thought; her next, that she must remain, as her father was from home, and Kate was out riding with Mellon; but little time was given her for reflection or for action, as the Colonel in person appeared in the doorway, with his sun-helmet in his hand holding back the scarlet silk curtain which divided the rooms.

It was simply an ordinary visit; and his two previous calls having been unreturned by her father, she felt that this was certainly somewhat of an intrusion; but the adventurous Colonel had in some way discovered that she was alone, and so he resolved to improve the opportunity.

He had left his sword and belt in the vestibule, and was simply dressed in a blue frogged coat, with the ribbons of his two orders of knighthood, and three medals in miniature like three shillings on his left breast.

Lena looked very charming on this evening; she was dressed in a species of loose robe of the finest muslin, white striped with scarlet; the sleeves were wide, and her round white taper arms could be seen through the delicate texture. For coolness, her dark hair was all unbound and rolled in rippling and shining masses over her back and shoulders, contrasting well with her slender neck and snowy throat, which was encircled only by a narrow scarlet ribbon.

The inlaid Bombay desk at which she was writing, the coloured note paper, the gilt filigree inkbottle, the silver-tipped porcupine quill with a gold pen, the tiny table, a beautiful marble slab on a gilt pillar, all aided to make Lena a pretty and ladylike picture; and so thought Colonel Rudkin, as he approached her with a succession of bows.

Whatever emotion Lena felt, she succeeded in concealing it

admirably under a calm, smiling, and well-bred exterior, as she gave her hand to the visitor, whom she could not welcome, and pointed to a chair at some distance from her own, but waited for him to speak.

"I have to apologise for disturbing you; but—but I have called twice, Miss Weston, since my arrival in Delhi, once after receiving the worthy doctor's card, I think; but have been unfortunate on each occasion in missing you all."

"Papa once thought—you know, perhaps, that he is very kind-hearted—of writing to you, such a letter of condolence as a clergyman may pen, about that most painful calamity."

"Ah—at Barrackpore—yes—very kind, I am sure."

Lena bowed and Rudkin coloured.

It was, he thought, deuced unpleasant to be condoled with as a new widower, by the very lady he was hoping to address as a lover. He felt the disadvantage of this, and hastened to speak again, but of something else.

"There are flying rumours of unpleasant disturbances being likely to occur all over India. We have never been forgiven the annexation of Oude, and letters from Simlah and Umballah inform me that the native troops are on very doubtful terms with their officers; but these things will pass away like other disagreeables," he added, while running his fingers through his fine bushy beard, and smiling under his thick moustache; though as we have elsewhere said, his mouth could laugh when his eyes did not, and a smiling lip was rather the normal expression of Rudkin's face.

He was a man of eminently distinguished appearance and bearing, tall and well-built, an inch or so less in stature than Harrower; and sufficiently bald now to have pleased even that individual, yet he had scarcely a grey hair, save at the temples, and his beard and moustache were still such a rich curly brown, that Mellon, Eversly, and other sceptics averred, "they were dipped."

His eyebrows met and were thick; his eyes were keen, bold, restless, and at times when he felt himself, as on the present occasion, in an awkward position, they wore a decidedly unpleasant expression. In fact, he was rather beetle-browed; his ears were large and thick, usually a bad sign and offensive to a close observer; but his manner was singularly suave and pleasant.

The military discontents, the proposed fancy ball, the state of the thermometer, and other thoroughly local subjects having been discussed, there was a pause, during which the Colonel rose, and coming over very deliberately to Lena, leant upon the back of her chair, and looking tenderly down upon her, said,—

"Miss Weston, or may I not in memory of past time, say Lena, you are still as beautiful and as winning as ever."

"Colonel Rudkin," she replied, while growing very pale, with

many combined emotions, "I need scarcely inform so well-bred a man, that gross flattery is closely akin to rudeness."

"Pardon me, I meant not that my words should be so harshly construed," said he with a sadness of tone, which was partly real and partly assumed; "I spoke but the truth."

"If I was ever beautiful," she replied, while turning her shoulder and curling her lip, "I should be so still, of course; for at five-and-twenty one should not change much."

"Unless one is ill-used," he continued, taking unknown to her a handful of her rich hair between his fingers and toying with it, "and I must confess that I used you cruelly, shamefully!"

Lena's breath came fast and thick, those were nearly the very words of self-accusation she addressed to herself when speaking to Harrower.

"Yes, Lena, shamefully and cruelly; but—" he resumed with more emphasis than apparent feeling, "think how I was situated *then;* of my debts, my imperilled commission, my prospects; yet oh, Lena! with all your loveliness——"

"Enough of this, Colonel Rudkin," said she, sitting with her face averted from him, as she knew there was an unpleasant expression in it, and she trembled the while, for she thought this reference to the past an insult alike to her and to the poor woman to whom Rudkin had sold himself, and who was killed by his side at Barrackpore, so *recently* too! "Permit me to remark, that it is useless in you to address me as a lover, and that flattery in one pretending to be so is mere impertinence."

"Lena!"

"I shall thank you, Colonel Rudkin, to address me as other acquaintances do, Miss Weston."

"But you said impertinence!" he faltered.

"Yes, because such language, while it pretends to give one greater gifts than one possesses, seeks only to rob the hearer of real self-esteem on the other. Flattery may do in flirtation, but not in love; and I do not think, Colonel Rudkin," she added, turning her dark and flashing eyes upon him, "that you would dream of flirting with *me!*"

"We can rarely flirt where we really love," replied Rudkin, who could preserve his coolness of bearing and modulation of voice wonderfully; "so I would beseech you once again, to think leniently of the unhappy past."

"I do think of the past," said she, beating the floor with a tiny foot that was unseen under her skirt.

"Will not the present undo it, Lena?"

"No."

"Will not the future?"

"No!" was the same frigid response.

He relinquished the tress of hair, and withdrew a pace.

"Alas! if neither the present—when I offer you my heart and home, at a time of threatened peril, when you may need all the protection a strong arm can give—nor the future which we cannot foresee, will undo the past, how can you seek mercy of Heaven when the dread hour comes?"

"How well you can talk! It is a fine thing to be able to do so, and it is an art in which you always excelled," was the cutting reply.

Rudkin now began to get irritated, and his secret character, which had a curious mixture of natural insolence with assumed suavity, began to display itself.

"Am I then to understand—for I have heard of your refusing many offers—that you have a decided objection to marriage?"

Lena gave a little angry laugh, as she replied to this odd question,—

"I do not suppose, that with all the sublime vanity of yourself, you are vain enough to think I refused any on your account! Oh, no! my dear sir—or that I am bound further to explain my reasons to you?"

"Of course not, Miss Weston."

"But you asked a plain question—if I have a decided objection—and I say, yes."

"Why?" he drew near her again.

"I wish to be free—free as air; now do you understand?"

"Not precisely."

"Then I am at a loss how to explain myself."

"You had no objection once——"

"When you deceived me, Mark Rudkin," she replied, with a heaving breast, and sparkling but averted eye, and this display of anger made the Colonel think that he was still master of the position.

"Speak not of that time, Miss Weston—may I not call you Lena? You know all I suffered when compelled to wed another in your place; but she is at peace now—so God be with her! She was, you know, ten years older than I; and for the present——"

"For the present, and for ever, understand this, Colonel Rudkin, that I wish to be free. In marriage men and women meet unequally. You only lose a few pleasures, if indeed you lose them at all, while we become the liege subjects, it may be of an arbitrary——"

"Arbitrary?"

"Yes, or a capricious lord; and if he has deceived one as a lover, he will be much more likely to do so as a husband, when he grows tired of the love and society of his wife. And now, to end all this most unpleasant and unprofitable conversation, Colonel Rudkin, after the deadly affront you put upon me in England, I

would not marry you, were you the only European man in the whole peninsula of India! So let us part on seemly terms at least, and recur to this subject no more."

He looked at her with something of wonder and admiration, for her manner was so calm, decided, and firm; and despite his pride and mercenary spirit, he could not help loving her still, after a calculating fashion of his own; but in concluding, Lena had unluckily and most unwittingly pointed towards the door, so his angry hauteur and jealousy got the better even of his passion.

"I see how it is," said he, "and I have been a great fool to intrude here, where I was unwelcome, and on such an errand; but I shall relieve you of my presence, Miss Madelena Weston. I should not have forgotten that your old friend, or cast-off flame —which shall I call him?—is up at the cantonments yonder. He has something more than his pay now, out of his old place in Cornwall, but I don't think it will do more than keep him in patent-leather boots, perfume, and hair oil."

There was now a cool insolence in the bearing of Rudkin, which greatly exasperated Lena; but she controlled herself, and thought "how different is all this arrogance from poor Jack Harrower's earnest and modest bearing!"

"Ladies are privileged to change their minds," said the baffled Colonel, preparing to retire.

"Not more than men; baseness and falsehood are, as *you* know well, Colonel Rudkin, peculiar to neither sex in particular."

"For heaven's sake, do not let us quarrel!" said he, still lingering, and with a sneer; "I know well that you would have loved me as of old—if, indeed, you ever loved me at all——"

"Sir!"

"But for one reason."

"I did cease to love you; I am not ashamed to say that I hated you, Mark Rudkin, for by your hollow arts you stole my heart from one who loved me well, and who loves me still."

"Ah!—you are aware of that."

"But what is this 'reason' to which you are now pleased to refer?"

"Simply the presence of Captain Harrower in Delhi, whither he came, permit me to remind you, on detachment—on military duty—and *not* to see you, as I, by a self-procured staff appointment, have come."

"You are wrong, sir," said Lena, coldly and calmly, "and never were more wrong in the whole course of your life, than in thinking I have been so influenced. Captain Harrower I shall ever esteem, but never love—shall never marry! No, Mark Rudkin, of that you may be assured. But if ever I do love again, as I once loved—if ever I marry, as I know my father and sisters wish me, it shall be with John Trevanion Harrower, and not *you*,

and of that you may also be assured, for the good and honest fellow loves me dearly still."

The Colonel said not another word, but bowed and retired, with his provoking and imperturbable smile.

A passion of tears, mortification, grief, and anger, conflicting with much of love for Rudkin, with a sublime respect and esteem for Harrower, swept through Lena's heart, and bowing her face upon her hands, she leant over her desk and wept.

"And it is for such a man as this that I have trifled with, and slighted the love of one so noble and true as Jack Harrower! Oh! my God, had I always been true to him, as he has been to me, how much grief, how much mortification and bitter pride had been spared me!"

There can be no denying, we are sorry to say, that something of her former regard for Rudkin had revived on seeing him, and more especially on hearing his voice, which was certainly a very pleasing one, with a species of chord in it; and the fact of his having been slightly wounded in the scuffle with the mutineers, had inspired her with a kind of pity, rather dangerous for Jack's hopes of success.

"I will never marry Rudkin," she had freely and frankly promised to Jack and to her father; but at the same time she had somewhat rashly pledged herself never to marry Harrower!

Rudkin was perhaps her present fancy; but Rudkin's second wife she would never, never be!

He had wronged and insulted her, and she felt that too keenly; and brave and worthy Jack Harrower deserved a wife who would give him all the wealth of her heart and love, and not one that was partly filled, and angrily too, by the image of another.

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT JACK OVERHEARD.

THE anxiety, or excitement, produced by the renewal of Harrower's addresses, and the blunt or abrupt proposal made by the Colonel, which, under all their mutual circumstances, Lena considered insulting, combined with the sudden preparations for Kate's marriage to Mellon, and an approaching separation from her, for such it would virtually be, and, since their mother's death at Thorpe Audley, the first break in their happy and contented family circle, had all a serious effect upon the health of our heroine, and on her spirit too, though she bore up bravely,

and set steadily about the duties of preparing for the great event that was coming—the issue of invitations, the ordering of dresses, and the wedding luncheon.

Meanwhile, Harrower at the cantonments was brooding over his late rebuff, but as he was to be Mellon's groomsman, he suddenly remembered that he would have to make a suitable present to the bride, and as this would afford a legitimate pretence for again visiting the Westons—or moth-like fluttering about the candle—on the very evening that Rudkin made his rather remarkable proposal to Lena, he rode into Delhi, and made a tour of the shops in Chandney Choke.

There, after being somewhat bewildered by the display of shawls, the produce of Cashmere (the intercourse between which place and Delhi is constant), and those native fabrics, which are prized by ladies over all the civilized world, many of them being elaborately embroidered—the needlework of Delhi is famous over all India—he turned his attention entirely to the jewellery.

No goldsmiths in the East have a higher reputation for taste and skill than those of Delhi, and the most brilliant *chefs d'œuvre* of the European artisan are cast into the shade by the beauty of their work. Jack was not long in selecting an entire suite of champac ornaments, so called from the flower, the petals of which are imitated in the design—a necklace, ear-pendants, brooch, and bracelets, for Kate. They were studded with pearls in blue enamel (five months' pay and contingent allowance, at one swoop!), and they seemed a rich and suitable present for a fair young bride, as they reposed in the soft blue velvet lining of the scarlet Morocco case.

Furnished with this, a pretty ring for Polly, and, as usual, a box of bons-bons for little Willie—Jack being intensely good-natured as any curly-pated Englishman of five feet eleven inches could be—he wended his way to the house of Dr. Weston.

No gong with its horrid roar announced his entrance on this occasion. The outer gate stood agape and wide open, for Kate and Mellon, on returning from their ride, had taken their horses round to the stable-yard, and the durwan was absent, for there was a marked carelessness in the conduct of all native servants now.

Harrower ascended the steps of the front door, which was also open, and unnoticed and unannounced, he proceeded through the lofty marble vestibule, without perceiving, by the Colonel's sword and belt, which lay on a side-table, that a visitor was within.

The kitmutgar, Assim Alee, suddenly appeared, and salaamed him into the outer drawing-room; Harrower gave him a card "for Miss Kate," and found himself alone.

He was about to advance towards the inner room, the windows of which he knew commanded a view of the extensive garden, when the deep fringe of the punkah, as it swung overhead, dis-

ordered his hair, and made him pause to arrange it at a mirror; and this simple incident, trivial as it was, saved him from a great unpleasantness, for while at the mirror, he heard voices beyond the silk curtains of the archway between the rooms, and the voices were those of Lena and a stranger—Lena and Mark Rudkin!

He stood for a moment as if rooted to the spot, and a cold perspiration started to his forehead; he trembled violently; honour and all good taste impelled him to retire at once, and softly too, for he quivered like a very aspen leaf, in dread of what he might hear, or that he might be discovered by them; but as he withdrew, he heard enough—yea, more than enough, for in reply to some remark made by Rudkin, in which he detected the sound of his own name—his name, and on that man's lips!—he heard Lena say, calmly and distinctly—

"Captain Harrower I shall ever esteem—but never love, shall never marry; no, Mark Rudkin, of that *you* may be assured!"

He hurried out, lest he might hear more. His rage, jealousy, and disgust, were all the stronger, that by his late pleasant intercourse with Lena, his old passion for her had regained all its former strength; and now he had to retire—literally, as he felt, to "sneak" out of the house, and with that bitter assurance of hers in his ears, and in his heart, to leave her in the society of his rival, of the man who first stole her affection from him, and shattered all his hopes—the very Rudkin she had pledged herself never to marry.

What sought he there now?

In that bewildering moment of bitterness, he felt that true love was a terrible passion, and that as the Canticles have it: "Love is strong as death—jealousy cruel as the grave;" but he was compelled to gulp down the latter emotion—to grin and bear it, as the fine old days of pistols at twelve paces had passed away for ever, though certain ideas of having some hostile catastrophe flashed vaguely on his mind, as he hurried through the vestibule, and out to the verandah.

There he met Kate, who, throwing the folds of her long riding-habit of Holland linen over her left arm, held out both her hands to him, putting her head on one side, with an air of waggery and grace. The bright young blonde was looking very beautiful, and the exercise of her evening ride had brought a faint tinge to her cheek, while her charming blue English eyes were radiant with smiles and happiness.

Suddenly their expression changed, for she saw that Harrower was deadly pale, that his air was disturbed, and that his eyes were fiery and moist.

"Are you ill, Captain Harrower? Heavens, you look as if you were about to faint!" said she, taking his hand between both of hers; "what is the matter with you?"

"A sudden sickness—a sickness of the heart, dear Kate; but I must begone."

"Why this haste—have you seen papa?"

"No."

"Or Lena, then?"

"No. These trifles are for you—this ring for my friend, Polly. I would they were better worth your acceptance."

"Oh, they are indeed lovely! Oh, this is too kind of you, Jack! How can I ever thank you?" exclaimed Kate, with much more to the same purpose, expressive of girl-like rapture.

"Happen what may, be assured of this, dearest Kate, that I shall ever be your friend, and I give you and my old chum, Rowley, my warmest wishes for your future happiness—my most earnest congratulations."

"Thanks, Jack."

"I was not without hope—a desperate hope, certainly," he added, in a strangely broken voice, "that—that Lena would have renewed her engagement with me."

"Dear Jack Harrower, you don't know how we all love you!" exclaimed Kate, with her bright eyes full of tears.

"On my part, Kate, that engagement was never broken," he continued, while the heavy moustache quivered on his lip with emotion; "but all that is ended now—all is over for me!"

"You should have loved *me*, dear Jack," said Kate, playfully, through her tears; "Lena is obstinate and odd in her pride, but she may change for all that; and if she does not, are ladies so scarce in India?"

"Oh, Kate, there is only one woman in the world for me, and she is Lena Weston."

At that moment they heard a step and the jingle of spurs, and Colonel Rudkin, with a rather irritated and disturbed air, fussily buckling on his sword as he went, stalked down the steps, and without observing who were under the verandah, passed through the garden-gate into the street beyond.

"*He* here! so—so—that explains all," said Kate, in a tone of dejection.

It did not, however, explain all, as they were both in perfect ignorance of the conversation which had taken place in the inner drawing-room.

Harrower pressed Kate's hand kindly, kissed her on the forehead, and without hearing a loud "hullo!"—an exclamation of mock indignation from Rowley Mellon, who was approaching, he sprang on his horse, and rode away.

By the time that Kate was made fully aware of the nature of the interview between Rudkin and Lena, and the latter had been informed of Harrower's having been in the house, Jack was galloping like a madman back to the cantonments as the evening turned into night.

Bitterness, sorrow, and fury were in his breast.

Pure love is no doubt a great means of humanizing and expanding the heart of man; but love at times becomes selfish and revengeful, and the heart feels very differently when a necessity comes for relinquishing the object so beloved. Friendship, one of the elements, certainly, of the passion, perhaps dies out, and the suggestions of pride, honour, and even of humanity are often weak when opposed to the goadings of disappointment and wounded self-esteem.

Harrower was deeply mortified, and in plain words, disgusted—intensely so, and entered his bungalow, swearing over a libation of brandy and soda-water that he would "live and die as single as an oyster!"

CHAPTER XXI.

SUSPENSE.

ABOUT this time the Fakir, Gunga Rai, promulgated in the cantonments that in a vision with which he was favoured by Brahma while he was asleep or entranced under ground, near the Cashmere gate, he had seen the body of the *last* white man swept down the Ganges to the Indian Sea, and his Mohammedan rival, the dancing Dervish Hafiz Falladeen, was not one whit behind him in his efforts to disturb the loyalty of the 38th, 54th, and 74th Native Infantry, by industriously describing the late Crimean war, or rather the wild ideas thereof, brought to the East by Baboo Bulli Sing, who had actually been in London with Azimoolah Khan, the confidential agent, despatched thither by Nana Sahib to press his unjust claim to the possessions of the dead Bajee Rao upon the British Government.

Covered with diamonds and cashmere shawls, those two fellows passed themselves off as princes in London, and were so well received in society, that when Havelock's vengeful Highlanders burst into Cawnpore, they found among the repositories of Azimoolah Khan, "letters from more than one titled English lady, couched in terms of courteous friendship," the countrywomen of those hundreds who lay slaughtered in the Fatal Well.

An excuse was wanted for revolt as the Hundredth year of Fate approached, and the greased cartridges suggested a ready one.

"These Feringhee devils," said the disseminators of treason, "have robbed us of our inheritance, and made us bondsmen.

They have made our princes nought, and taken from them the fields of their fathers. They have declared apostacy from the creed of Vishnu no longer a crime, and self-sacrifice to the Goddess of Destruction no longer justifiable. Our widows are forbidden to perform the sacred rite of Suttee; they abjure their vows, and enter for a second time into the bonds of holy matrimony! The Feringhees have established schools in every village, colleges in every city, and entrap our children into Christianity. Their missionaries have declared our priests to be impostors, our gods but sticks and stones, and our most holy temples to be full of all uncleanness. They have polluted our bread with the bone-dust of a sacred cow, and our salt with its more sacred blood. They have smeared the cartridges that we must put into our mouths with the fat of unclean animals, to despoil us of our caste. No man now dares to take a kid with impunity, an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth. Our Thugs are hung as murderers for following the profession taught them by their fathers. Their steamboats have driven our palwars off the waters of the great Gunga; their fiery cars rush over the land like demons, and now they have stretched an iron wire from Calcutta to Peshawur, to make the lightning itself carry their messages. We are but dogs in their estimation!"*

This feeling had been growing fast while on their homeward way. Baboo Sing and Azimoolah Khan passed through Constantinople when the fortune of the Crimean war was most against us, and when, amid the horrors of that terrible winter our poor soldiers were dying by thousands in camp, and trench, and hospital; and so the ex-kitmutgar and retired Thug returned to Cawnpore and Delhi, comfortably assured of the decadence of British power everywhere!

At Meerut, Umballah, and Delhi, incendiary fires were now of frequent occurrence, and were generally attributed to the sepoys, none of whom, however, could be detected in the act; and so confident were some of the European officers in the fidelity of their men, that they stoutly assigned these outrages to the bad feeling of the peasantry; but, ere long, large signal beacons began to blaze night after night upon eminences and ruins of historical significance, while the rumour went from man to man that Turkey had been betrayed by the Feringhees, with every species of Oriental exaggeration; that the religion of the Prophet and the Grand Padisha was on the eve of destruction, and that nothing could save it but a general Mohammedan holy war.

On the 6th of May, about six weeks after the attempt of the 34th to revolt and murder all their officers, seven remaining companies of the corps were degraded, broken, and set adrift in presence of all the troops in and around Calcutta. For a similar

* Concerning all this see the U.S. Mag., 1857.

crime the 19th Native Infantry were erased from the Army List; two sepoys of the 70th were transported for conspiring to attack a fort; at Umballah the incendiary acts by the end of April made up "an appalling list," and the hanging of Mungal Pandy and the Jemmadar, who was a Brahmin of the highest caste, after the mutiny at Barrackpore, raised the temper of the sepoys to a fever heat, for both of those men, though mutineers and murderers, died like resolute and exulting martyrs, shouting "*deen! deen!*" to the last.

"None can know where this unfortunate ulcer will break forth next," Harrower observed at the mess of the 54th, one evening.

"Let us hope that the worst is past," said Colonel Ripley; "I rely greatly in the power of discipline, which I remember the Duc de Rohan defines as 'habitual obedience to lawful command reduced to a science, and enabling every man to know and to do his duty, whether by the orders of a superior or the force of circumstances.'"

"I quite agree with you, Colonel," added Willoughby, like many others forgetting that after every white officer was butchered, there still remained the native officers to enforce obedience; "and if my men become refractory, I should be inclined to try the power of discipline, as Frederick the Great of Prussia proved it, on the Grenadiers of Ogilvie, a Scottish general in his service."

"Any lesson is worth having just now," said Harrower.

"Fire away, Willoughby; let us hear what Frederick did!" bawled Dicky Rivers from the lower end of the mess-table.

"He was at the palace of Potsdam, when some of his orders, by their excessive severity, caused great discontent among the Prussian troops: so the soldiers there in garrison resolved to avail themselves of that ease and facility with which Frederick could at all times be approached by them; and thus, a deputation of the Grenadiers of Ogilvie marched deliberately from their barracks across the great square which lies before the palace, and halted at the porch.

"An officer in waiting—afterwards the great Field Marshal Keith, who was killed in battle by the Austrians at Hochkirchen—acquainted the king of their arrival, adding,

"'Shall I order them back to barracks, sire, or place them under arrest?'

"'Do neither; they have come to see me, and see me they shall; good soldiers have nothing to fear from me, and the regiment of Ogilvie is one of the finest in Prussia. I shall try on them the power of discipline!'

"Frederick hastily put on his shabby old uniform, his long jack-boots that had never known blacking, his orders of knighthood, his cocked hat, sword, and sash.

"'Sire,' urged Keith, 'will there not be an inconvenience in all this?'

"'To whom?'

"'To you, sire.'

"'How, comrade Keith—how?'

"'Discussion will lead to other deputations, and every order your majesty may issue will be dissected and cavilled at in turn in every guard-room and beer-shop in Prussia.'

"'No matter, comrade—march the rascals in; I'll trust to the power of discipline!'

"In they came accordingly, twenty tall and swinging fellows, all after Frederick's own heart; but the appearance of the king, dressed as if for parade, awed them unto total silence.

"'*Achtung!*' (attention), cried he, drawing his sword; 'to the right face—front!—to the left face—front!'

"These commands the deputation who were formed in line, obeyed in perfect silence, and wondering what was to follow a reception so unexpected; and so Frederick cried suddenly:—

"To the right about face—to your barracks, quick march!'

"Then, as he never gave the word 'halt,' they felt compelled to march on, and the old king and Marshal Keith laughed heartily as the baffled deputation disappeared within the barrack-yard where their expectant comrades gathered round them, to hear the report of how Frederick had received their complaints.

"'We have never opened our lips,' said the oldest grenadier, with a very crest-fallen expression.

"Der Teufel! did you not see the king?' cried they.

"'We have just left him——'

"'Blockheads! and why did you not follow your instructions?'

"'It was impossible.'

"'Impossible—and why so?'

"'Because when we saw old Father Frederick in his fighting-coat and dirty boots, and heard his voice of command, our hearts failed us, and the—the power of discipline proved too great.'"

"But there is something in the spirit of discontent here,.beyond—ah—the power of discipline," lisped the languid Horace Eversly; "see, what may that mean, Colonel Ripley?"

Through the open windows of the mess bungalow, a great rocket was seen to ascend in a fiery arch from the very centre, apparently of the Mogul Palace; soaring into the clear but dark blue sky of the night, it burst in many brilliant sparkles, which descended like a beautiful shower of falling stars or giant diamonds, and then faded away.

And now, as if in answer thereto, a great fire suddenly shot up in the distance, away beyond the Jumna, and it burned steadily and brightly near the tomb of Homaion, casting a lurid light on the mighty shaft of the Kutab Minar, and the stupendous stone

stair of the ruined observatory, among the remains of ancient Delhi.

"These niggers are certainly up to something!" said Dicky Rivers.

"Come, come, Rivers," said Colonel Ripley, "are you so thoroughly a John Bull, that you cannot make a compromise with your national prejudices?"

"I never shall make a compromise with these murdering black devils of Pandies," said the boy stoutly.

What these signals and many other similar might mean, none could correctly surmise, though all canvassed the matter long and freely before they separated for the night; but the *suspense* of such a time was terrible!

Those officers whose regiments had mutinied and been punished or dispersed, knew the worst; but none save those who have endured it, can know the dread, the aching doubt, the sickening and clamorous anxiety of the heart, suffered by those whose corps outwardly remained faithful, and who were therefore compelled to sleep with them, in their tents among the open lines of a cantonment.

No European laid his head on the pillow with the certainty of being a live man in the morning, and none who heard the reveillez welcome the rising sun could be assured that he, and those he loved better than himself, might see it set beyond the horizon.

"I wonder when our fellows will follow suit, or if they will actually revolt at all, they seem so quiet and orderly?" were the frequent and painful surmises, uttered in whispers.

When, over all India, the slender British force was isolated in detachments, hundreds of miles apart, how many a poor lad, thinking of home and his mother's smile, lay at night in our cantonments, awake and nervously attentive, hearing the camp *ghurries* (or bell-metal gongs on which the sentinels strike the hours) clang from time to time, and thought perhaps, that each hour so clanged, might be the last he would hear, and the signal for revolt!

And so the feverish night of expectancy would pass; the morning gun would boom from the adjacent battery, and he knew that God had permitted him to see another dawn—dared he hope for the close of another day?

Expecting "a devil of a row," as he phrased it, Harrower, like his brother officers, felt all the misery of lying in his bungalow, dozing in the dim watches of the night, snatching forty winks of sleep, and then starting to grasp the revolver under his pillow, and to glance round fiercely and fearfully by the fitful light of the night-lamp, most probably the improvised tumbler, with a little cocoa-nut oil and a cotton wick, and to wonder whether the crisis would ever come! And if it did, whether he would survive it, to see old England, or perish at the hands of treacherous

and fanatical savages, as so many good, and brave, and innocent Britons did elsewhere.

In such hours of anxiety, terror, agony, and suspense, how miserable was the lot of those poor men who had wives and little ones, whose lives they deemed more precious than their own!

And so, with the thermometer raising his blood to fever heat, despite all the exertions of the punkah-wallah, and the tatty-wetters, who drenched the mattings spread over the windows, Harrower would lie awake, staring at the folds in his mosquito curtains, trembling in his heart for the Westons, and thankful that at least Mellon and his bride, per the East Indian Railway, would soon be on the other side of the Calcutta Ditch.

Then he would wonder at times, as he tossed restlessly to and fro, if they were really all the same people, who had seen in England the hills and valleys, the fields and roofs over snow—actually snow; whose fingers and noses had been frost-bitten at home, whose teeth had chattered with cold; who had seen thistle-leaves on the window panes at Christmas, and the flames in the jolly old English fire of coals turn blue in the winter air—the winter whose nights are sixteen hours in length—the cold and hardy December, whose ruddy sun must be set by four o'clock.

Harrower and Temple frequently warned Sergeant Ryder and their soldiers of the Cornish Light Infantry, as also Mellon and Doyle did their detachment of the Bengal Fusileers, to be careful in keeping their arms and ammunition in order, and to be ready to rally at the alarm-post on the least sign of danger, and at a moment's notice; to avoid the sutlers' tents, and all intoxicating drugs and liquors, as none knew what a day or an hour might bring forth, or when the wretched handful of Europeans in India might be as completely overwhelmed, by the unnumbered millions of the natives, as if they had been cast into the Bay of Bengal!

Nor could they in particular forget that they were up country, nine hundred miles, as a bird flies from Calcutta and the watery highway to England.

It was always surmised in Delhi, that the Native Brigade would mutiny in the night, join Baboo Bulli Sing's rabblement, and slaughter all opposed to their plans; that the scheme was gradually adjusting for a general revolt over all India; that the white women and girls had all been duly allotted or portioned, as the most valuable spoil to the leaders; yet the routine of military duty and of civil life went on, and all the Europeans were contented apparently, and outwardly were as happy, as people would be, each of whom had suspended overhead, by a hair, a sword like that of Damocles the flatterer.

There was a time, as old officers could remember, when it was very different, and when our countrymen in the upper provinces were wont to be regarded with such profound humility, that the

natives, on beholding one for the first time on a solitary road, or other sequestered place, have been known to throw themselves on the ground, and to cover their faces, till the white lord Sahib passed.

As Kate and Mellon's marriage-day drew near, all remained quiet in and around Delhi; and many there were who began to hope, and to pray in their hearts that the time of dread and danger was passing away.

CHAPTER XXII.

WEDDING FAVOURS.

SOME might think, perhaps, from the tenor of the last chapter, that this was scarcely a time for marrying or giving in marriage; but the arrangements of Mellon and the Westons had been made, and as it was necessary that he should get down to Calcutta, it was all the better that Kate should accompany him —perhaps Polly too—and people are generally disposed to hope that the affairs of this life are ordered for the best.

So all the European ladies in Delhi and the adjacent cantonments had, for a short time, found plenty to talk about and to interest them in the approaching marriage—who the bridesmaids were to be, and what the bride was to wear; were Eurasians who were not married to officials to be invited; were cards to be issued, or not; would the Chaplain of the station, the Reverend Mr. Jennings, perform the ceremony, or would he "assist," if it was performed by the Doctor in person—it was so odd to be married by one's own father, that the ladies rather thought he wouldn't; but perhaps he would give a ball. How much had the Calcutta uncle settled on Rowley Mellon; it was well known that Colonel Skulk, of the opium department, in presents, plunder, and perquisites, had realized a few lacs of rupees at least in Seinde and Oude. Would Mellon take a villa, or only live with the family; the Doctor's house was a very large one, and very elegant, certainly; but to have one's own residence was more pleasant, yet it might be a useless outlay, if Mr. Mellon—who, by the way, was only a subaltern—was suddenly recalled to head-quarters.

"That was the chief bore of the army," said Mrs. Patna Rhys, who had long ago fixed upon Rowley as a son-in-law; "a girl was always better off with a civilian—the C. S. was the best matrimonial market after all."

Et cetera—and a great deal more to the same purpose was gossiped about, in and around the capital of the Moguls.

Kate contented herself with four bridesmaids—Lena, Polly, Flora Leslie, a dark-haired and grey-eyed Scotch girl—and Miss Patna Rhys, "a tiresome girl, in her thirties," as Pat Morris Doyle said; "one who had worked, by the powers! slippers and smoking-caps for every eligible man in the station, and without any fatal result, as she had never succeeded in making any fellow jealous, which is half the game with Berlin-wool work."

Polly was in a prodigious flutter of excitement; all the arrangements had to be made so suddenly that she flew incessantly to and fro between her own house and the Leslies', and the great palatial villa of Colonel Rhys, the commissioner, about ribbons, flowers and laces, gloves, sashes, and bonnets; for next to figuring at the altar herself, it is a young girl's greatest glory to see her friends go through the pleasant ordeal; and to form an item, a unit on the occasion, more especially to act the important part of bridesmaid, is delightfully flattering in the hope it affords of ere long appearing at the same place, in a less subaltern capacity; so that bright Hebe, Polly, was up to the very eyes in bustle, excitement, and business, we may be assured!

No expense had been spared on the wedding luncheon, and the fruit bazaars had been ransacked by the kitmutgar for dainties of a better kind than those furnished by the country around Delhi, where the mangoes taste of furniture oil, the apples are without flavour, the guava and banana are worthless, though peaches and melons are abundant and good; so the kitmutgar—marvelling the while, perhaps, as to *who* might enjoy the feast—provided the plums of Bokhara, figs of Candahar, and pears from Peshawur, all wonderfully and deliciously preserved in sugar, and folded in tissue paper.

The pair, when wedded, were first to go to Meerut, thirty-four miles from Delhi, a queer and quaint old town, but a pleasant military quarter; and so inexorable time at last brought round the morning of the 11th of May—Kate Weston's wedding day.

Over-night Mellon had partaken of his farewell dinner as a bachelor, with the jolly fellows of the 54th mess, and had favoured them—pretty close on morning gun-fire—with his ditty of the "Bengal Fusileers." He had fully explained to Harrower the tenure of Rudkin's interview with Lena, assuring him that all was over between them for ever; but still the ill-omened sentence haunted Jack, even when he tried to be lively, and to con over the speeches he would have to make on the forthcoming auspicious occasion, and strove to store his memory with choice scraps from Byron, Moore, and Shelley, for the behoof of the bridesmaids.

Marriages in India usually take place at the somewhat uncanonical hour of five P.M.; but Kate's was announced for half-past three; so as Mellon was hovering about the Westons', Jack

Harrower was left all day to himself; but as the eventful hour drew near, aware that he would soon be in Lena's society, and in a rather official capacity, though his heart was heavy, Jack made a careful toilet of his full uniform. There was much extra care bestowed on the moustache and his curly dark hair, which grew so thick that he had to tug at it with both hands on the comb ere he proceeded to part it, and rasp away at the back division with a couple of ivory-handled brushes.

When Harrower put on his handsome Light Infantry uniform, with its white facings, gold lace and epaulettes, the broad pipe-clayed shoulder belt, with its sparkling plate, that bore all the regimental honours from "Roleia" to "Goojerat"—a very different style of uniform from that worn now by our line officers, who look like police or penny-postmen with their trumpery collar-badges—he could very little foresee all that was to happen before he doffed those gay trappings again.

Marriages are all so much alike that we shall refrain from afflicting the reader with any elaborate detail of Kate Weston's, and yet there are certain portions of the narrative that cannot be omitted.

The company assembled in the Doctor's church, a somewhat plain edifice, built of brick, whitened over with chunam, the lofty and arched windows being all shaded pleasantly by green Venetian blinds, and broad impending eaves.

The worthy old Doctor was in full canonicals, to perform the ceremony himself, "assisted" by the Chaplain of the station, while many a carriage and pair—turns-out that were unexceptionable—with phaetons, even palanquins, buggies from the cantonments, and saddle-horses from the same place crowded all the street without, for many officers of the garrison who were not invited came, like the Eurasian girls and others, to look on, filling up the pews and galleries of the church; for the three daughters of the Reverend Doctor were the most conspicuous girls in European society at Delhi.

A great rabble of natives, chiefly Mohammedan and Hindoo beggars, were collected outside, jeering, jabbering, and performing strange antics, while peering mockingly, at times, into "the temple of padre Weston Sahib, where the Feringhee women sat among the Feringhee men—and oh, Allah! (or Vishuu!) with their necks and bosoms uncovered!"

To depict that motley crowd would require the pencil of a Leech, with, as Rowley Mellon said, "no end of coloured illustrations;" and meanwhile, under a verandah close by, the band of the 54th, especially the white musicians and drummers thereof, were getting up a little music suitable to the occasion; and as the company continued to arrive, a small choir, whose roost was in the gallery, were attuning their pipes prior to attempting Mendelssohn's wedding march.

"As to music being the food of love, Jack Harrower, is all very well, or was so in Shakespeare's time, I suppose," whispered Dicky Rivers; "but a marriage ceremony is always a dismal business, and I don't care how soon all this is over, and we are attacking the cold fowl and iced champagne, exploding the crackers, and listening to the speech you'll make when proposing, or returning thanks, for the health of the bridesmaids."

Not a shade of nervousness or nonsense could be traced in the bearing of Rowley Mellon, who was accurately attired in the trappings of the Royal Bengal Fusileers, who gained their blue facings on the field of Plassey. Douglas and Willoughby were there, and indeed, there were so many uniforms of all kinds present that the church looked quite gay; but Harrower's mind was wandering away at times to the old English fane at Thorpe Audley, with its dark oak pews, its quaint arches, altar-tombs, and stained glass windows.

"Jack," whispered Mellon, "after we—the happy couple are gone—for Heaven's sake try and be jollier to-night than you look just now. That deadly-lively, sun-baked Briton, Eversly, of the 54th, and many others, will be at the Doctor's ball, but you will be quite the Pan of the Dairy—a groomsman is fair game for the girls. You will meet no end of people to-night—in fact, all the feasible Europeans—the Staff, the Civil Service, and their wives and daughters, doing 'the light fantastic,' in our honour—so Jack, do be jolly—flirt and make love right and left, or try your luck again with Lena."

But Harrower shook his head, and partly to change the subject (while feeling the boredom of Mellon and himself being stared at by every eye in the church, as the bride had not arrived), he said with earnestness:

"From my heart I wish you joy, Mellon; you are marrying when youth and love are in the flush——"

"Jack, you are becoming quite sententious!"

"I have read somewhere that 'if men intend to marry, let them marry young; while the poetry of youth is strong, then buy your wedding-rings and satin waistcoats.'"

"But you, Jack——"

"I was thirty last month, Rowley; and, like the monkey who has seen the world, I have gained experience."

"Yet I would advise you to ask Lena again."

"Again?" said Jack, starting.

"Yes, again," urged Mellon, while twirling the tassels of his sash, and looking up at the clock in the gallery, where its hands seemed to stand still, but indicated a quarter past three. "Try, and if she refuses you——"

"Well, what then?"

"May she do penance in her fortieth year, with a terrier to

console her, her hair in crackers, or curl-papers, and a cherry-tipped nose that might tempt the sparrows to nibble at it."

A great hubbub outside, and the arrival of a carriage at that moment, made Mellon start, and twirl the tassels of his sash more vigorously than ever—a famous military resource in times of dubiety or vacancy.

But still the arrival was *not* the bride; it was only the Brigadier, old General Graves, who came in with his aide-de-camp, both in full puff, and each with his cocked hat under his arm.

But anon there came other two carriages, and through the open doors Mellon could see what seemed to be a mass of snowy white foam rolling up the passage, as Kate came, in her bridal attire, wreathed with white flowers, and wearing Harrower's suite of champac and pearls, her veil flowing behind her, and looking as only a beautiful young English bloude can look on her wedding-day. Pale, calm, composed, but noticing no one, she leant on the arm of her white-haired father, who, feeling that he was now about to lose her for ever, was perhaps the more nervous of the two, for his hand trembled as it grasped the Book of Common Prayer, that was half hidden by the loose, wide sleeve of his surplice, to the skirt of which little Willie, the orphan child, was clinging.

Behind came the four bridesmaids, their dresses all rustling together, a sea of white satin and the richest lace; and ere Mellon knew very well where he was, or what it was all about, he found Kate by his side, the Doctor before him, with his book open, commencing the prayers, while the Chaplain of the station, the Reverend Mr. Jennings, made the responses.

Harrower stood beside his friend, and, as his eye wandered over the marriage group, to settle on the downcast face of Lena, who occupied near her sister the same position that he held near Mellon, he thought to himself that artists might talk and twaddle about light and shade and colour, but that ladies, as a general rule, knew more about the study of true effect than all the Royal Academy of England.

Lena—who, but for the absence of wreath and veil, looked most alluringly like a lovely dark-haired bride—had her neck encircled by a slender gold chain, to which was attached a pearl locket that Harrower had given her long ago; and on this day he was secretly charmed to see it again on her breast, where at each deep respiration—for she was much moved—it dipped down out of sight between the boddice and the snowy bosom; yet in his outward bearing Jack was ice-calm, cold, and dignified, as he thought; and still he felt himself somewhat of "a gaby" for acting so; while Lena, who knew not precisely how much he had overheard or misconstrued of that unfortunate interview, was pained to perceive this, and that there was actually a hard expression in his eye when it met hers.

Even amid the solemnity of the marriage ceremony, and just before the consecration of the ring, Polly could not help whispering to Rivers,—

"How do I look, Dicky?"

Dicky could only sigh with admiration.

"Enchanting, I suppose?" resumed the incorrigible Polly; "but just as I was going to the carriage, the horrible punkah blew all my hair out of order!"

Dicky looked at the masses that fell in silky ripples round Polly's beautiful face, and they were golden as the bullion of his own new epaulettes in the sunshine.

"Here, Dicky, button my glove," she whispered next; "quick. Oh, what a muff you are—your fingers are all thumbs!"

The button proved a little obstinate, or the Ensign's eyes wandered from it up the snowy little arm, so the operation was a protracted one, and caused Doyle to whisper to Eversly,—

"I believe, on my conscience, Horace, that girl would flirt with Baboo Sing, or Bluebeard himself, to keep her hand in practice."

A loud noise among the natives outside made several eyes turn to the door, just at that important part of the service when Mellon placed the little golden hoop on the slender third finger of Kate's white, tremulous hand, and they and all around them knelt down.

"Let us pray," said Doctor Weston, in a clear, calm, and earnest voice; and as he proceeded with the invocation prescribed by the canons of the Church, so intent were all, that none save Brigadier Graves, Douglas, and one or two others, perceived the sudden entrance of two officers, in their frogged undress surtouts and forage caps.

One was Colonel Rudkin; the other a perfect stranger. Both were very pale, and the latter had two bloody handkerchiefs—bound with haste, apparently—round his bridle-arm, which seemed to hang powerlessly and painfully by his side.

Perceiving that the ceremony was not yet concluded, they drew back a little way, whispered together gravely and earnestly behind their caps, and paused with a certain air of undisguised anxiety, and the irresolution natural to well-bred men at such a solemn juncture; and so they waited till the last words of the beautiful service of the Church of England for the solemnization of matrimony were uttered; and then—when the Doctor, closing his book, pressed it to his breast and closed his eyes in mental prayer, while Kate, in a flood of tears and all palpitation, was embraced by her sisters, and all the ladies flocked round to shower their kisses and congratulations on her as "Mrs. Mellon"—the two ominous visitors drew near Brigadier Graves, and spoke to him in anxious whispers, and while they proceeded he started and visibly changed colour.

Just as Rudkin caught Harrower's hostile eye, Polly seized his arm, saying,—

"Remember, Captain Harrower, you are to dance the first waltz with me to-night; I have written your name upon my card."

"With pleasure, Polly dear; but why——"

"To reward you for that most beautiful ring you gave me, and because I wish to make Dicky Rivers—oh, *so* jealous."

"Dicky Rivers will never be jealous of me."

"How so?"

"He thinks me quite a fogie."

"No, he does not; wait until he sees your arm round my waist—though it might go twice round, it is so long——"

"And your pretty waist is so slender, Polly! But what is the matter—is there a fire, a row among the Pandies, or what? Everybody seems to be stricken with consternation."

A pale and agitated crowd of ladies and gentlemen was now flocking round the General, who exclaimed in an excited manner,—

"To the cantonments, gentlemen—away, without the delay of a moment, and get your men under arms! The native troops at Meerut have revolted—murdered all their officers and every Christian they could lay hands on—and are now within an hour's march of Delhi!"

"My children—oh, my children!" exclaimed Dr. Weston; "what horrors may be in store for you! God help you and protect you! I am but a feeble old man. A little time, you may all be where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but shall be as the angels are!"

And like many a parent who heard him, the poor man wrung his hands in agony of spirit.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TIDINGS FROM MEERUT.

THE tidings brought by the wounded officer were in every way calculated to excite the greatest consternation amongst those who heard him.

Thirty-four miles distant from Delhi, is the town and station of Meerut, where Kate and Mellon meant to spend the first few days of their honeymoon, prior to taking the railway, and afterwards the steamer, for Calcutta.

It is a place of great antiquity, but the vengeance of Timour has left little to interest the eye of the visitor, save some great Mohammedan tombs, one of which is a beautiful mausoleum, and known by the somewhat poetical name of the "Resting-place of Abu."

Two miles to the southward lay the cantonments, with the dwellings of the English judge, the collector, and other officials.

There were quartered Her Majesty's 6th Dragoon Guards, or Carbineers, six hundred strong, but only half of those men were mounted, and on very wretched horses; a battalion of the 60th Rifles, one thousand strong, a battery of Horse Artillery, and a few recruits; but the native troops outnumbered these by a few hundred bayonets, and consisted of the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry, the 11th and 20th Regiments of Bengal Infantry.

Few could have conceived that when the strength was so nearly equal, the Bengalees would have dared to revolt, yet ninety troopers of the 3rd Cavalry, when ordered to practise with the new rifled carbine, refused to touch the cartridges, and by order of Major-General Hewitt, were instantly tried by a court-martial, and sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour, for six or ten years, according to circumstances, while their comrades looked on in ominous silence, for by this sentence which manacled and made them felons, they lost their *caste* for ever.

This was on Saturday, the 9th of May, and we have shown that the sepoys of Meerut were in secret communication with those at Delhi.

On the Sunday evening following, while the British troops and civilians were in church, the sepoys of the 11th and 20th—the former a corps with nearly a hundred years of history, and which served long ago at Guzerat and Bhurtpore—assembled riotously upon the parade ground, about six o'clock, evidently intent on

disturbance; and many officers courageously and confidently hurried among them, to endeavour by their influence and presence, to arrest the tide of mutiny.

Among others who made themselves particularly active, was Colonel Finnis, of the 11th (whose brother, at that very juncture, was Lord Mayor of London), a brave and amiable officer, who, when in the act of haranguing his men, was shot by them in the back, and hewn to pieces amid fiendish yells as he fell from his horse.

Bigotry, combined with a desire of vengeance for many a sentimental wrong, was hot in the hearts of these men, and blood having inaugurated the revolt anew, the mutineers gave way to the most dreadful excesses. The 3rd Cavalry broke open the jail, which was two miles distant, released their sentenced comrades, together with two thousand two hundred other felons, thieves, dacoits, Thugs perhaps; troopers, police, and convicts all fraternised and rushed to join the Infantry; and then ensued the indiscriminate slaughter of their officers, and every other Christian, without respect to age, rank, or sex, amid shouts of—

"The raj (rule) of the Feringhees is past! The century of their power is ended! Is it not so written in the books of our prophets? Deen! deen!"

The bayonet and the butt end of the musket, the sabre and the more terrible tulwar were at work, and deeds of awful infamy were perpetrated: poor little children were hewn to pieces, torn asunder, or brained before the eyes of their agonized parents; women were outraged again and again ere they were slaughtered, riddled with musket balls, or gashed by bayonets; and every indignity that the singularly fiendish invention of the Oriental mind could suggest, was offered to the dying and to the dead.

Meanwhile, other sepoys and thieves were busy pillaging and firing the houses and bungalows. Great pyramids of lurid fire ascended, roaring into the starry sky, assuming various hues, according to the nature of the material that was consumed, red, purple, and yellow, wavering and blending together; the noise of the spreading flames, and the crash of falling houses, mingling with the death-shriek of a hunted victim, and the diabolical yells of the mutineers, most of whom were maddened by bhang, or intoxicated with the liquors of all kinds they had drunk.

"I was despatched by General Hewitt," continued the officer, who narrated these startling tidings to Brigadier Graves and a terrified auditory, "to bring down the Europeans from their barracks, which lie—I may *now* say lay, as they are probably destroyed—at some distance from the sepoy lines. By the time I got there the darkness had come on; but we could see the flames of the burning town and cantonments.

"The Queen's Dragoon Guards mounted—at least as many as had horses—and rode forth with me at once; but the night air became

so thick and dense with haze, smoke, and impalpable dust, that we knew not which way to turn, and so went many miles astray at a gallop, before we discovered our mistake. Overhead the moon was shining like a gas-lamp in a London fog.

"Ere long we caught a sight of the conflagration again, and making a flank movement round it, came upon the parade ground, where the mangled corpses of Colonel Finnis and many other officers were still lying, and there we found the Rifle Battalion and the Horse Artillery awaiting orders, while in the darkness and confusion the mutineers had given us all the slip, and—after being glutted with slaughter and laden with plunder—were on the march for Delhi.

"I accompanied the Dragoon Guards and some pieces of flying artillery in pursuit, and we picked off a few of the scoundrels who had loitered in the rear of their comrades, weary with excesses, or stupified with bhang. With my own hand I cut down five or six, till a sowar of the 3rd Light Cavalry hit me in the arm by a pistol shot; and then some of the sepoys I had wounded, clung like tigers to the bridle and girths of my horse, in their wild endeavours to drag it and me down together.

"By the delay incident to this, I was separated from the Queen's Carbineers, but I could hear the booming and see the yellow flashes of the artillery, which had unlimbered and opened fire upon a thick copse, in which it was thought some of the mutineers were lurking. Many a heavy iron shower of grape and canister shot swept among the mangoes with a terrible sound of tearing and crashing, but killed no one, for a very simple reason—there was no one in the copse to kill.

"The mutineers were in full march elsewhere, so the commander drew off the troops to protect the station from a midnight attack, while I, by making a long detour towards Jullalabad, and trusting to the strength and speed of my horse, after spending some twenty-four hours in the saddle, have only arrived here now, in time to warn you, Brigadier, that Delhi will be instantly attacked, so, for Heaven's sake, see at once to the safety of all Christian women, children, and sick."

Such was the weary messenger's rapid narrative of that terrible outbreak at Meerut, where, by a series of the most fatal and senile blunders, on the part of the executive, a great community of Christian people perished helplessly, brave officers by the hands of their own men, while so many delicate, innocent, and honourable English women, wives and mothers, were horribly maltreated, ere they were consigned to one bloody holocaust with their children—and all this, as they were returning on a Sunday evening from the House of Prayer!

The third act of that terrible drama, "the mutiny of the Bengal army, began with a great success. The mutineers burned down a camp, and murdered officers, ladies, and children, literally in the

presence of a superior force of European soldiers;" superior considered in a moral sense.

If such deeds of horror occurred yesterday at Meerut, what might not occur in Delhi to-day, when the native garrison was so vast, and the European force so small? This was the terrible question asked by every heart in secret.

It was towards Delhi that all the mutineers of India turned their faces and their hopes, for there, on its vaunted peacock throne—that wonderful royal chair, the precious stones of which, Tavernier, the traveller, a jeweller by profession, valued at one hundred and sixty millions of livres—sat the lineal descendant of the magnificent Shah Jehan, the founder of the great mosque at Delhi, and above his palace there still waved the green banner of the prophet Mohammed.

Before the wounded fugitive from Meerut could get his wounds or his wants attended to—the poor man was half dead with fatigue, thirst, and want of sleep—and before any plan for the permanent safety of the white women and children had been devised, Colonel Rudkin, who had gone forth to reconnoitre, came hurrying back to Brigadier Graves, to announce that "a cloud of white dust, with the glitter of steel, was visible on the Meerut road, descending the slope towards Tahurpoor, and that no doubt could exist, but that it was the mutineers, approaching the Doab Canal, and the pontoon bridge of the Jumna!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

KATE'S WEDDING DAY.

"HARROWER—dear Jack Harrower," said Lena, in a voice of touching earnestness, taking his right hand in hers, as he grasped the bridle and mane of his horse with the left, "help Mellon to protect my poor papa and sisters from peril; oh, save them if you can, for we have none to look to here but you and him!"

Mellon was now her brother-in-law, so the conjunction of names was not without its charm.

"Protect you? I shall do all that man can do, and if I fail to save, I can at least die with you all; but matters have not yet come to so bad a pass as that with us," he added with a smile

to reassure her; "come, Rowley, here is your nag; we must mount and ride, old fellow."

"To your posts, gentlemen," cried the brigadier; "Colonel Rudkin, ride to the Chief Commissioner and desire him to have the city gates shut. Colonel Ripley will march the 54th Regiment, with two field guns, at once to the Cashmere Gate; the 38th and 74th to form the supports, and take up an alignment along the road. Let the Flagstaff Tower be prepared for the reception of all women and children, and therein we shall place our most reliable troops, your company of the Queen's 32nd, Captain Harrower, and your detachment of the Bengal Fusileers, Mr. Mellon. But, in the first place, you will also march to the Cashmere Gate. Bring into the tower also all Indo-Briton women and children, lest they, poor creatures, pay dearly for having some European mixture in their blood. Ride, gentlemen, quick—you have not a moment to lose! I would to Heaven," added the Brigadier, "that all our women and little ones were safe beyond the Calcutta Ditch, and that we alone were left here to face those fellows with the bayonet and those greased cartridges they pretend to make such a fuss about."

"Ay, General; but I would rather that all we love were far away on the blue sea, the high road to old England," said Dr. Weston; "but God's will be done—God's will be done," he added, clasping his hands, "here as in Heaven!"

"In less than an hour, ladies, you shall have a hundred British bayonets round you," said Harrower, cheerily, as he mounted his horse.

To the small force of their countrymen under their joint command, did he and Mellon look chiefly for the protection of those they loved, through the black and disastrous time that seemed now at hand; and Harrower thanked Heaven from his heart that chance, the mere turn of military duty, had thrown him into Delhi at such an eventful crisis.

"Bring your double-barrelled rifle back with you, Jack," shouted Dicky Rivers. "By Jingo! I should like to have a shy at the Pandies with it, for I can sight it to half a hair's breadth."

Not foreseeing exactly all that was to ensue, the total subversion of all civil and military authority, the Westons, prior to going to the Flagstaff Tower, like many other persons, hastened to their own houses to change their attire, perhaps to secure their valuables; Mellon kissed his wedded bride, and galloped after Harrower, whose powerful horse was already careering along Delhi street, past the long frontage of the magnificent palace, past the magazine, where the brave and energetic Willoughby was getting several pieces of cannon loaded and judiciously pointed, but as the two rode on, they became aware that the mockery, the jeers, and the maledictions of the copper-coloured rabble followed them.

On reaching the parade in front of the British Lines, they found their junior officers, who not having ladies to attend to had preceeded them, getting their men under arms. Dillon had the detachment of Fusileers collected, and Harrower thanked his lieutenant, Frank Temple, a smart and soldier-like young lad, with a sharp eye and determined manner, for having all the men so speedily collected.

"Get your ammunition loose, lads, we'll need it all before night," said he. "Temple, tell them off by fours, and I'll be with you in an instant."

Intent on securing his mother's miniature and the Bible with her autograph, "Mary Trevanion," he rushed to his bungalow, but his household goods were gone! Ferukh Pandy had anticipated the events of the day, and with the other native servants had made the rooms bare, for they had looted—literally swept—the place, and left nothing but the punkah and the dining-table. Even hookah, pipes, cigars, and all were gone, and with a malediction on his lips, Harrower hastened to rejoin his men, galloping along the front of the lines, which are more than a mile in length; and where the Native Brigade were noisily swarming out of their bungalows, red-coated and cross-belted, and falling in by companies and battalions.

Already almost ignoring the British officers, Pershad Sing, senior sergeant of the 54th Native Infantry, was calling out:—

"Fall in, *Mapert-Ka-Pultan*"—(for this was the pet name of the corps)—"fall in! Soubadars, look to your companies,—and glory to Brahma this day," he added, showing the ruling thought.

"Fall in, *Balunteer-Titteelee-Ka-Pultan!*" cried the Sonbadar Major of the 38th, a corps having dark green facings, with "Seringapatam" and "Punniar" on their colours; and with something like a roar of defiance pervading their ranks, the regiment formed in battalion; for ever since 1852, when it was ordered by Lord Dalhousie to Pegu, it had been stubborn, insolent, and dangerous in composition, though styled "Volunteers."

The 74th (save one, the youngest regiment of the Bengal army) remained tolerably quiet, and even cheered Brigadier Graves when he passed them on the march; still, like the rest, they were not the less resolved to betray and murder him and every other white man ere the sun set on the tomb of Homaion.

The little band of Europeans, one hundred in number, under Harrower, Mellon, Doyle, and Temple, in light marching order, issued at double quick from the Cantonments, notwithstanding the heat of the May evening, and that some of the men were carrying on their shoulders a child sometimes, as well as their rifle—his own little one, perhaps, or it might be a comrade's whose wife had her arms already filled.

Harrower was not without fears, though Colonel Ripley and

other Bengal officers laughed at them, that they might be intercepted and cut off; yet out they came from the camp at a steady run, and unmolested, though scowled at by the sepoys, and on they went, down the road towards the magnificent city, the towers, temples, and domes of which were bathed in gold and crimson hues by the sun, which was now in the western quarter of the sky. They passed a bazaar, a mosque, the house called Ludlow Castle on their left, and then proceeded right into the angle of the formidable ramparts, where the Cashmere Gate and bastion of the same name are, and from every point the natives mocked and reviled them.

Prior to this, at the Pirghyb Mosque, which stands distant about a mile from the walls, Harrower halted his men, to rest them, for they were sorely blown; but that no time might be lost in a crisis so pressing, he ordered them to load and cap their rifles.

After this, as they marched past the Flagstaff Tower, which was already full of ladies and children, a drummer and fifer of the Cornish Light Infantry—two mere boys—struck up cheerily the absurd air, "Slap, bang! here we are again!"

This was done by Jack's order, to inspire some confidence in those who heard it, and such indeed was sorely wanted at a time when the horrors of the Meerut massacre were fresh in the minds of all; thus many a Christian mother and timid girl looked anxiously, with all their hearts and souls, at that little band of red-coats, in whose weapons and bravery all their hope of preserving life and honour lasted.

With very different emotions did they survey the three strong masses, also in red, but with dark and grim visages, which after a time came debouching in successive columns of sections down from the cantonments, with their drums beating, the barrels of their sloped muskets and their fixed bayonets glittering in the sun, and with the British colours flying.

They were accompanied by a vast mob of camp-followers and other natives, among whom could be seen the dervish Falladeen, with his serpent and iron-shod staff, whirling like a spinning-jenny at times, and many a Hindoo Fakir, the most conspicuous of these being Gunga Rai, who alternately stood on his head, or rolled with singular velocity horizontally along the ground, covering himself with bruises, dust, and ashes, in his progress.

Just as Harrower, to await further orders, halted at the Cashmere Gate, a tall and powerful horseman, of wild and furious aspect, wearing an old Light Cavalry uniform, a white turban, of capacious dimensions, and armed with a tulwar, dashed through it from the city, and rode at a break-neck pace round the Moora Bastion, towards the Jumna.

This excited individual was Shumshoodeen Khan, who had

mounted a horse stolen from Colonel Rhys, and was now gone to join his old comrades of the 3rd Cavalry.

Uttering seditious and exciting cries, he was pressing on towards the river, when he was suddenly confronted by Colonel Rudkin, who was returning, on duty, from the house of Sir Theophilus Metcalf, which stood about a mile north of the city.

The Colonel called upon him to halt and surrender; instead of doing so, Shumshoodeen fired a pistol, which wounded the horse of Rudkin, rendering the animal furious and quite unmanageable. With louder and more defiant yells, the powerful savage rode round and round the Colonel, with tulwar uplifted, while shrill cries of alarm and inteuse commiseratiou rose from the many ladies who saw his perilous position from the ramparts of the Flagstaff Tower; and among these was Leua Westou, who, with her opera-glass, beheld the exciting encounter, and with a pallid face and terror-stricken heart, recognised Rudkin.

She could see the very expression of his features, which were colourless and excited, with set teeth and stern eyes, as he kept his sword on guard, and interposed between his bare head (for he had lost his hat while endeavouring to sooth his frantic horse with his maimed hand) and the tulwar—a cross between a sabre and a butcher's cleaver—which armed the fierce Shumshoodeen Khan, whose dark visage was actually empurpled by the cruel joy that sparkled in his eyes.

A sudden and united cry arose from those iu the tower, as Rudkin's bleeding and wounded horse fell under him, and what was worse, partly *on* him! The man was lost, and all rivalry between him and Harrower about to end for ever!

With a shout of defiance, Shumshoodeen brandished his tulwar towards the Flagstaff Tower, and then towards the Cashmere Gate, so much as to say, "Look here, Feringhees, and see what I shall do!"

"Your rifle, Phil Ryder," said Harrower, snatchiug it from his sergeant, and quickly adjusting the slide of the back-sight; "what's the distance, do you thiuk—about six hundred yards—ch?"

"I should think as that ere was about it, sir," replied the other, coolly, as he closed his right eye, and held up the thumb of his left hand at arm's length.

Harrower levelled the rifle over the saddle of his horse, and shot the nag ridden by Shumshoodeen. It must have been hit in the head, as it lashed out wildly with its hiud legs in the air, and tossed the noseless Brahmin full upon his cranium, with his feet towards the sky, while Rudkin was vainly striving to free his right leg from the superincumbent weight of his dying horse.

"The devil!" said Jack; "am I nervous to-day, that I miss the crow aud hit the pigeon, in a quiet pot-shot like this?"

But in a momeut more he was in his saddle, and galloping to

encounter the baffled mutineer, whose weapon had fallen from his hand, and whom the recent shock had somewhat bewildered, a fortunate thing for Rudkin, who must have been hewn to pieces ere Harrower could come to his rescue.

"Rudkin beset and about to perish," was Jack's heroic thought; "I shall save him—save him for Lena, even if I should die in his place," and he spurred his horse to the rescue.

On seeing him approach, however, Shumshoodeen Khan uttered a howl of baffled rage, sprang over some garden walls, and disappeared. Harrower assisted the breathless Colonel to rise, and, dismounting courteously, gave him the assistance of an arm, as they proceeded towards the Cashmere Gate in silence. The Colonel was perhaps mortified and humiliated, and would rather have owed his life to any other man in India than John Trevanion Harrower.

The latter, though glad that he had saved him from a miserable and sudden fate, could not but feel that he was doing so perhaps for Lena; thus his satisfaction was dashed with bitterness. He was sure that one of the little English bonnets that appeared above yonder grim bastion was hers, and that one of the many white handkerchiefs now waving in applause of his courage and generosity was waved by her.

"By Jove! you've done a plucky thing, Jack!" said Mellon, patting the horse's shoulders, as Rudkin and Harrower came slowly in.

"Brigadier Graves," said the Colonel, "I trust you will keep in mind, in the despatch of this day's work to His Excellency the Governor-General, that to Captain Harrower I owe my life, and I have known a man get the V.C. for a smaller matter."

The Colonel had regained alike his presence of mind and his habitual smile; he said,—

"But for the wound in my bridle-hand, which I received at Barrackpore, and disabled me from controlling my horse, I might have taught yonder scoundrel a severe lesson—a sowar I think—at least, he rode like one."

"A deserter from Meerut," said Harrower, with a little smile, for though the Colonel was a tall and strongly-built man, he was personally no match for the Hindoo.

Ere the General, who was now in undress uniform, with a telescope slung over his shoulder, and a solar-topee on his head, and who rode a strong active horse, could reply to Rudkin, or compliment Harrower, a shout that rang along the whole extended line of the city walls, was responded to by another more faint and distant, and a body of cavalry were seen riding confusedly down towards the bridge of boats, by which the Jumna is crossed, just where the new causeway leads southward round the palace walls, into the great street, which bears the uncouth name of Chandney Choke.

Clad in silver grey, with orange facings, these were some of the blood-stained troopers of the 3rd Light Cavalry, who preceded the other mutineers now advancing along the Meerut road; as they came on, they had slaughtered cruelly many British subjects whom they met travelling dawk (*i.e.* post), and now, with the confidence of being welcomed and expected, they appeared with brandished swords, in front of the royal city of Delhi!

The Commissioner had not arrived, and so the city gates were *not* yet shut.

The General assumed the command of the native Infantry, and sent Harrower's Englishmen into the Flagstaff Tower, to protect the women and children, who had flocked there in great numbers, like affrighted doves, to one common nest.

Then Dicky Rivers, who being on leave from the 6th Bengal, having no particular post, had arrived with Kate, Lena, and little Willie, together with the Miss Leslies and every other white woman and child he could cram into the doctor's carriage on the way.

Dicky was in a state of tremendous excitement, full of boyish courage and enthusiasm; he saw nothing in it, beyond a fight, "and before the eyes of all the ladies too!"

"Why hang it, Harrower, where's the double-barrelled rifle?" was his first question.

"Stolen—some scoundrels had looted my bungalow of everything to the bare walls, before I got there."

"Then," grumbled Dicky, "I shall join your fellows, with a common rifle-musket. There are the Pandies at the bridge of the Jumna, by jingo!" added the boy, his handsome English face flushing as he spoke; "by the living jingo, whatever that may be, I'll certainly knock some of them off their legs—I was a prime bowler at Addiscombe!"

"I fear, Rivers, you'll have shooting enough to last you till the rainy season sets in," said Doyle, in whose keen Irish eyes, there was something between a smile and a glare; "we shall have to-night a mighty fine *tomasha*, as these fellows call it."

"And what do you call it in Ireland?"

"A row—a shindy, my boy."

"But where is Polly—where is Doctor Weston?" asked Harrower, sheathing his sword, and looking round.

"Do *you* not know?" asked Lena in a voice of sudden alarm and misery.

"No, I have this moment come down from the lines. Are they not here?"

"The kitmutgar Assim Alee told us that they had set out for this place more than half an hour before us, and they have not yet arrived. Oh! Harrower, what awful calamity can have happened to them? Where can they be? What shall we do? My father

—my own papa—our dear Polly!" added Lena and Kate together embracing each other in floods of tears.

Harrower was very much perplexed and distressed; he knew not what to think or say.

"Can they have fallen into the hands of the rabble?" asked Rivers with a pale cheek.

"Impossible, Dicky!" said Harrower, with some asperity; "the streets are all in possession of the Native Infantry, the king of Delhi's people under Bulli Sing and the police. Your papa must have lost his way and taken shelter somewhere with Captain Douglas, with Mr. Jennings, the chaplain, or perhaps with Willoughby in the Magazine."

The last suggestion was not a lucky one, and made their hearts tremble.

"In the Magazine!" said Kate with blanched lips.

"Oh! go out and see—go out and search, like a dear good soul, Jack," urged Lena.

"Impossible, Lena, you ask me what I dare not do."

"Dare not, even for me?"

"No, I dare not leave my post—neither can Mellon, or any of us."

"Why?"

"Without orders at least. The gates of the tower are closed and barricaded, and my duty keeps me with you and my men," said Harrower sadly but earnestly, while the two sisters wrung their hands in silent misery; so leaving Mellon to explain, and to console them, as best he could, Harrower hastened away to place his Light Infantry men and the Fusileers at all the most important and available loopholes and embrasures.

CHAPTER XXV.

WHAT BECAME OF POLLY.

WHILE his daughters in tears and alarm were hastily changing their wedding bravery for more sober and serviceable dresses, and were secreting about their persons such jewels and valuables as they possessed, knowing well that the moment they left their comfortable and elegant mansion, it would be looted or robbed by the native servants—perhaps by those they had cherished, fostered, and protected most—the doctor summoned his kitmutgar, with an umbrella, as the sunshine was still very hot, and issued forth into the streets, in search of further or surer intelligence, or to see what means were being taken to defend the vast and populous city against the approaching force of desperadoes.

"Beware, dearest papa!" cried Lena anxiously from her bedroom window as he left the house, "be cautious, I beseech you, for the streets are full of tumult."

He waved his hand to her, and passed on his way, little foreseeing that this was the last time that beloved voice would ever fall upon his ear!

Many a poor parent in our Indian cities endured the horror that now beset the heart of gentle old Doctor Weston—a horror and anxiety that the mind may imagine, but which no pen can portray.

He had seen his three daughters, the dark-eyed and quiet Lena, the bright blonde Kate, and the golden-haired and laughing hoyden Polly, growing up like blooming flowers by his side, day after day, increasing in beauty, modesty, affection, and worth, each of whom might be a crown of glory to some good man—for they were happy and true-hearted girls—girls such as old England glories in producing. They had filled his heart with joy, all the more that each seemed all unconscious of her natural charms and native goodness; and now in the full bloom of their young lives, for what a fate were they perhaps reserved!

He thought of the ladies at Meerut and his blood ran cold! Lena, Kate, and Polly—what might they not endure, amid those black and yelling hordes, who were now in full march, flushed with rapine, crime, and slaughter? He prayed of God, in his inner heart, that if they could not be saved, that death might fall

on him and them at once, and all together, in any form He pleased.

He knew well that many more years could not be in store for him; but his heart bled for his children; he shuddered at their probable fate, and in anticipation, the iron entered his soul! For himself, he had neither fear nor feeling; he knew that the young may die, but that the old—*must*. Yet the "sudden death," that might come upon them all, was, he knew, that affliction which he had prayed and petitioned against, in the form prescribed by the English litany, for years. Often he had repeated it as a mere matter of form; but it had a terrible significance now—very different from the sound it bore in the quiet old village church of Thorpe Audley.

On all sides, and in every street he passed through, excitement reigned supreme, in booths, bazaars, and shops, but especially in Chandney Choke, or the Street of Silver, for there were all the plate-smiths and dealers in precious stones, jewellery, and bullion, and there is one street at least, similarly named, in almost every Indian City. None knew what might be the issue; but all who possessed property feared they might be plundered of it, for there were thousands of ragamuffins, porters, or coolies, discharged bheesties, peons, deserters, and syces, and others, who looked forward with exultation to the total subversion of everything like law and order.

Mounted officers rode hurriedly to and fro, with unmistakable anxiety in their faces, and Lieutenant Willoughby had still influence sufficient, through the force of discipline, perhaps, to make the native workmen at the great Arsenal place several pieces of cannon into excellent positions, and double load them with grape.

Colonel Patna Rhys, and others, with their families in carriages, passed at a rapid pace towards the Cashmere Gate, and they loudly urged the Doctor to lose no time in getting the ladies of his household conveyed there in safety, too.

Impressed more than ever, by all this unwonted bustle and alarm, Doctor Weston, when near the college, and St. James's Church (more than a mile from his own house), turned to retrace his steps, but a vast mob of excited natives of the lowest class and caste came holloing wildly along the street, barring his way. In the midst of them, towered a black and lumbering elephant, with a red flag flying from a staff stuck in the howdah on its back; seated therein, was a Hindoo Fakir of the Senessee tribe, who had long resided under a ruined arch, near the tomb of Homaion, and who, as a voluntary penance, had more than one iron ring inserted into the most tender parts of his flesh.

This religious lunatic by frantic gestures, and a harangue in Oordoo, was inflaming the passions of his hearers to the utmost

extent; and among the advancing mass, the gleam of arms and knives could be seen.

Seriously alarmed on perceiving this noisy multitude, which, in consequence of his clerical character, would be almost certain to assault and slay him, when a soldier or civilian might be permitted to pass unharmed, Doctor Weston paused irresolutely, and turned to his kitmutgar, who suggested that their safest mode of returning would be along the front of the king's palace, where none would dare to molest them.

"Sahib," added he as a sudden idea seemed to strike him, "I know a quiet little alley by which I can lead you between the Selinghur Fort and the palace gardens, and through it we can escape all these people."

"Thank you, my good fellow," replied the Doctor, in Hindostanee; "then let us lose no time—to your guidance I commit myself."

The Doctor, who had but a vague idea of that quarter, knew not that the alley indicated had no other outlet than the water of the Jumna, followed his servant; but they had barely proceeded twenty yards, when they encountered a Mohammedan dervish, armed with an iron-bound *lathee*, or club. He stopped and confronted them, and Doctor Weston, who had some vague idea of having seen this personage before, endeavoured to pass with a bow; but Hafiz Falladeen—for it was he of the serpent and of the tattered and filthy orange shirt—was not disposed, at this critical juncture, to part company with his professional rival, the Feringhee padre.

The opportunity was too good to be missed!

"Salaam," said the poor Doctor, vainly endeavouring again to pass.

"Salaam, Sahib," said Hafiz, with a mock genuflection, but with a ferocious smile, as his talon-like fingers, which grasped his club, trembled with the hatred, fanaticism, and cruel joy that filled his heart, to find that one whom he deemed an intruder, an interloper, a preacher of heresy and false doctrine, and a polluter of holy places, was in his grasp and at his mercy on such a day of turmoil and confusion, when the green banner of the Prophet, and the golden jerryput of the Moguls, were about to be unfurled side by side, on the Palace walls of Delhi.

"You will have the kindness to permit me to pass," said the Doctor mildly, in Hindostanee, on seeing with alarm that the other was resolutely barring the way; "I am in haste to reach my own house, and if money—even a golden mohur—"

"And I, too, am in haste, but to reach the cantonments," said the dervish in his harsh, guttural voice, while the expression of his dark face, daubed as it was with streaks of brilliant ochre, and surrounded by his coarse, matted, and heavily greased hair, grew something absolutely fiendish in expression; "yes, the can

tonments," he repeated, "for those are coming from thence, and others, from where the Tomb of Abu lies at Meerut, who shall teach you Feriughees a terrible lesson."

"I do not understand——"

"Ha! the salt you have eaten for the hundred years since Plassey, is now to be cast in the dust and trodden under foot—do you understand that? Ere long you will call on the rocks to fall down and crush you; on the earth to open, or the hot sands to rise up and cover you; but in vain, for ye shall be smitten both hip and thigh, and not one shall escape the sword of the avenger, for the attempts you have made, for the destruction of our religion and the confusion of castes."

"You are wrong, my brother," the Doctor was beginning, when the dervish, with a yell, exclaimed,—

"No brother am I of yours, dog and infidel!"

"You are wrong, and all who think with you are wrong," said the Doctor, with great earnestness, and turning to his kitmutgar, as if to seek even *his* intercession and assistance in this unpleasant *rencontre*, but the Bengalee looked on with a stony eye and a cruel grin on his mouth. "We have no desire, my worthy friend, to interfere with any of you in religion or caste, least of all such as I, whose mission it is to teach that we should all love one another as ourselves, and dwell in peace and good-will with all mankind; striving also to inculcate that which would expand your minds, raise all the mental faculties, refine and dignify your tastes, give you a thousand sources of pure and intellectual employment, make you love one another, and adore one great and munificent Deity."

Poor Doctor Weston! he might as well have expatiated on the Greek participle, the integral calculus, the philosophy of the infinite, or the electric telegraph.

"Is the padre sahib a liar? who, as such, shall hang in hell by the tongue—a liar as well as an expounder of false doctrine," yelled the dervish, flourishing his lathee, after spinning round with a marvellous velocity, that seemed to combine all the gyrations of harlequin, columbine, and clown in one; "will he tell me that it is not true that the Queen of England has cast dust into the eyes of the King of Roum and of General Napoleon, and that she should have her tongue slit, like the witches of Cashmere; and has she not intrigued with the great Lord Sahib Bahadoor at Calcutta, to make all Mussulmans and Hindoos, even as the Christians, who are infidels, and spit upon holy things?"

Unfortunate Doctor Weston shook his white head hopelessly, and again endeavoured to pass; but again his frantic brother of the cloth barred the way, saying,—

"The Zemindars of Oude can raise a hundred thousand soldiers, and these alone, when led by the Maharajahs, the Rajahs, the Chiefs and Talookdars, could sweep you into the Ganges, and

Oude is to all Hindostan less than a finger is to the hand. Yet, for its annexation, dearly shall you pay, accursed Feringhee!"

"Alas! of all these things I am as innocent as of the atrocities of Timour," urged Dr. Weston; "and I trust that not again, as in his time, the Destroying Angel may spread his dusky wings over Delhi."

"Is the Sahib a liar?" resumed his tormentor; "and will he deny that the great Lord Sahib at Calcutta and the Koompanie mean to slay the learned and the holy men, and to bribe the sepoys —the pious Mussulmans and the high-caste Brahmins—to defile themselves by biting cartridges greased with the fat of the pig—a forbidden and uncleau thing? Many have died by the bullet rather than do this, and many more shall die. But the symbols have gone forth and passed over all the land; the chupatties have gone from mosque to mosque, from village to village, from city to city, and from barrack to barrack; and at holy wells, and by the Ganges, the Jumna, and the Indus, men, as a covenant with their fellow-men, have drunk the sacred waters from the leaf of the holy lotus tree—the same tree which Mohammed saw in heaven near the abode of delights; and the time is come when—as it was written in the books of the Prophets—the Feringhees shall perish, even to the white suckling that hangs by its toothless gums upon its mother's breast—smitten all, as I now to death smite thee!"

And ending his peroration with a hyena-like yell, the dervish swung his iron-bound lathee in the air, and, full upon the head, struck the unhappy clergyman a dreadful blow, that stunned and stretched him on the earth, bathed in his blood.

"Quick!" cried the dervish to the kitmutgar; "ere the slaughter begins, bring hither one of his daughters at least—the youngest if you can—and remember the promises made and the order given by Mirza Abubeker, on that night of council in the Dewan-Khana."

Through a postern gate in the palace garden wall, which formed one side of the alley, they dragged the insensible form of the poor doctor, whose pale face and white silver hair were all dabbled with blood, and there they cast him roughly on the gravelled walk. The kitmutgar then appropriated his watch, rings, and purse, and hurried away to ensnare at least one of the daughters, as directed, while the cruel and fanatical dervish said,—

"Here I shall await you for half an hour, before hastening to where I am sorely wanted—at the sepoy lines."

The rascally kitmutgar was soon at the house of the Westons, where he found the elder sisters busy with Dicky Rivers, into whose care and ample courier bag they were consigning many articles of value, while Polly was wandering in a very bewildered way through the outer and inner drawing-rooms, as if she knew not what to preserve or what to abandon, for her household lares were there; and then with many a low salaam, and while keeping

his palms meekly folded together, the valet approached her and whispered in his broken English,—

"Oh, Missee Pollee—oh, Missee Pollee!"

"What, what is it?" she asked with alarm at his manner. "What do you mean, Assim Alee?"

"Your papa—padre Weston Sahib."

"What of him—where is he?"

"Oh, Missee Pollee! oh, so ver' terrible!"

"What is terrible? Where is papa?"

"Out there, not ver' far, but he wantes you, oh! so much—so ver' much!"

"What—he wants me—how?"

"He is ill—ver' ill—oh! so ill in the streets. Come with me, he wantes you."

Trembling and pale, Polly called once or twice in great alarm to Lena and Kate; but as they did not hear her, and as the valet, whom they considered a very faithful fellow, urged that her father wanted her alone, she snatched her shawl, bonnet, and parasol from a sofa where they lay, and ran hurriedly out of the house, following the kitmutgar, who contrived to send another servant to Lena with a message to the effect that "the Doctor Sahib and Missee Polly had gone to the Flagstaff Tower, on the road to the Pirghyb Mosque," intelligence which certainly rather bewildered the two young ladies, as they could not conceive it possible that their father would look so sharply after his own safety and Polly's too, without consulting theirs.

Once out in the streets, which were full of wild and excited tumult, poor little Polly Weston—who had never been there afoot before, but had always ridden or driven—was compelled to confide in the protection of the kitmutgar, though she almost instantly repented of her imprudence in not seeing Lena, and obtaining also the escort of her cousin Rivers; but anxiety for her father, of whose illness or accident, and of whose particular desire for herself, she could obtain but a very confused account from the wily valet, spurred her on, and it was not until she found herself past the Bank, which in former times had been the residence of the hideous little hooknosed Begum Sumroo, and her adopted son, the miserable Dyce Sombre (whose bribery caused the disfranchisement of Sudbury), and so far from home as to be close to the Calcutta gate, and under the very walls of the king's palace, that her heart began to fail her, even though she had by her side one who had been her father's most trusted and faithful servant, since they had landed in India.

Could she but have seen the contents of that faithful and enterprising fellow's pocket!

As they turned into the narrow alley between the garden wall of the palace and the Selinghur Fort, the impatient and expectant dervish Hafiz Falladeen suddenly appeared. She shrunk

close to the side of the kitmutgar, and actually clasped his arm, but the ruffian shook her off with a shout of derision, and fled. Then, with a shriek of terror, the poor girl found herself in the grasp of the dervish, deserted, alone, and in a narrow place, between high, black, and frowning walls.

She felt as if in a dream. In the distance was a hum of sound, the united clamour of many thousand voices rising from the streets, amid which she could detect the occasional beating of a drum, the note of a British bugle, the roaring of a gong, and the clanging of the bell of St. James's Church. But her fluttering heart died within her, and her knees bent under her, as the grasp of the hideous dervish tightened to a tiger-clutch on her delicate arm, and his keen, fierce, and sensual eyes gloated over her fair face, her golden hair, and wonderfully bright and beautiful complexion.

A sudden thought seized her—a flash of hope.

She tore off her white kid gloves, even that one which Dicky Rivers found it so difficult to button, and unclasping her bracelets, and drawing off her rings, among others, that which Harrower had given her, she placed them in the hand of Hafiz, and said,—

"Take these—take them all—but oh! lead me to a place of safety, to my father's house, or to the Flagstaff Tower."

He scarcely knew what she said; but he pouched her ornaments however, with a grin of satisfaction, and there was at that moment an expression in his eyes, which we can only describe by the word carnivorous, that made the girl shudder, for the dervish paused to consider whether he should destroy her for the sake of her valuables, lest she should accuse him of robbery, keep her for her wondrous beauty as his own spoil, or sell her, as he was bound to do, to Mirza Abubeker.

The latter conviction, in which religion, lucre, and duty oddly mingled together, triumphed, and he proceeded to drag her towards the postern in the garden wall, within which, her father now in a state of half consciousness, was lying.

"Death without good works before it, is doubly death," said Hafiz, "and one of my good works shall be to lead you to a place of safety."

"And to my dear papa," she added imploringly, for she understood his gibberish so far.

"To the padre Weston Sahib?"

"Yes, good man, to my papa if you know him."

"Yes, yes."

"Oh, thanks—thanks, how shall I ever thank you?" asked Polly with a heavy sob and many tears.

"Trust yourself to me, Mem Sahib," said the dervish, "I am called Hafiz, because I have read the entire scriptures, and the hundred and fourteen chapters of the Koran; but I have read

more, and I know word for word the precious writings of Saadi, the Persian, he who wrote 'Gulistau,' and what says he? Three sages once debated on which of all the evils of life was the greatest; 'old age oppressed with poverty,' said one; 'pain endured with impatience,' said a second; 'death without good works before it,' said the third, and with him I agree," added this curious compound of fanaticism, lust, hypocrisy, and greed, as he struck with his lathee on the postern door already referred to.

It was opened; Polly saw a magnificent garden amid a blaze of sunshine beyond, and when the iron-studded postern closed again, she was a hopeless prisoner in the palace of Delhi, and in the immediate grasp of the Soubadar Baboo Bulli Sing!

"Is she safe?" asked the kitmutgar, who had been loitering at the end of the alley.

"Yes—safe as if she was under the seal of Solomon, or in the sevenfold hands of Vishnu, which you believe in more, perhaps," added the dervish, as he hurried off to the sepoy cantonments, and in these terrible hands the poor English girl was left, for this was one of the "good works" of Hafiz.

Long ere she could fully realize the misery, or the full sense of her situation, as she sat on the grass, with her father's head on her lap, while he lay, half insensible, between life and death apparently, the dervish, Hafiz Falladeen, was among the lines of the Native Infantry, preaching sedition, and urging slaughter, with a success equal to his wishes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FLAGSTAFF TOWER.

BRIGADIER GRAVES, having resolved upon a defensive policy, had, as already stated, selected the Flagstaff Tower, as a refuge for the women and children, who now became the chief objects of solicitude. Situated on high ground, north of the Cashmere Gate, it is circular in form, built of bricks burned in the sun, and is of considerable strength.

All the Europeans, however, were not there, as a large party of officers and ladies were—unfortunately for themselves—collected in the main-guard, which adjoins the Cashmere Gate; and to these two points many delicate English women in their silk or muslin dresses, with little Parisian bonnets, all far too small to shield their soft faces from the scorching sun, were hastening now, as we have elsewhere said, like doves scared by the approach of a flight of fierce black vultures.

The resources of the Brigadier were great, for Delhi was full of the material of war, and if but five hundred men remained staunch to him, he had no fear for the result of an assault from the mutineers of Meerut; but the events which occurred within the city, after the arrival of the revolted battalions, have never, and can never, be presented in a very consecutive form, so dreadful was the massacre that ensued, and so little did the few who escaped it know of aught that happened beyond their own observation.

There in the Flagstaff Tower, were a terrified flock of women of all ages, many with their children, and all gazed with blanched faces on the sepoy lines, whence came, they feared, their foes, rather than their defenders. Many of these females were mere girls, some were recently wedded brides—though none so recent as Kate—and some there were who, in a short time, would certainly be mothers.

Fresh from their happy and peaceful English homes, though the wives of soldiers (or civilians), they had never heard a sound of strife, or seen other indication of it, than the mimic warfare of a field-day at Chatham, or in Hyde Park; and now with pallid lips apart and eyeballs strained, they found themselves face to face with death, as they watched the scene from the Flagstaff Tower, and, with the terrors of Meerut in their hearts, prayed

in silence to God, for courage and coolness—for aid and succour for their husbands and children.

With shrill yells, and brandished swords that gleamed in the sunshine, the 3rd Light Cavalry boldly crossed the bridge of boats by which the Jumna is spanned, and rode round the north flank of the Selinghur Fort right into the city by the Calcutta Gate, and instantly commenced the work of destruction, by setting fire to the houses and cutting down every European they met. The wild cries that rang in the streets, and the sight of the smoke and ascending flames, filled with growing fears the hearts of those in the Flagstaff Tower, and caused restless glances of peculiar import to be exchanged along the ranks of the Sepoy Brigade, which was under arms between the Tower and the Cashmere Gate.

On went the mutinous troopers. A little dispensary near the fort was plundered, and there Chimmun Lall, a native doctor, was shot. On seeing the Commissioner, Mr. Simon Fraser, driving his buggy in haste towards the palace to procure, no doubt, the influence of the King, Mohammed Bahadoor and his sons, they dashed after him with wild halloos. Fraser—a bold fellow—faced about in his buggy, and shot the nearest pursuer in his saddle, but ere he could cock a second pistol, twenty sword blades were drawn reeking from his body. His head was then hewn off and borne away in triumph.

Halting at the palace gate, they demanded of Baboo Sing to see Captain Douglas, the commandant of the guards. That officer came resolutely forward, sword in hand, to remonstrate with them, but was instantly shot by Shumshoodeen Khan, and was horribly mutilated by others. Dismounting now, several rushed upstairs to his apartments within the royal palace, and finding there the Reverend Mr. Jennings, chaplain of the station, and his daughter—a young lady possessed of great beauty, who had recently come from England, and was about to be married, they butchered them both. The father perished first, despite the shrieks and entreaties of the daughter, who threw herself on her knees before them; but knelt in vain, for she too perished, after being subjected to indignities "which a Mohammedan would consider the worst and vilest his own wife or daughter could suffer."

Everywhere now, magistrates, merchants, clerks, judges, collectors, indigo planters, their wives and children, were surrounded by a sea of slaughter. The bank was plundered, and the manager, his wife, and their five children, put to death by the singularly cruel mode of having their throats slowly severed by pieces of *broken glass*. The office of the *Delhi Gazette* was demolished, the press thrown into the Jumna, the types were used as slugs, and the printers and compositors were literally hewn to pieces.

Believing their father and Polly to be somewhere in the city,

Lena and Kate became dreadfully excited, though Harrower said everything he could imagine to convince them that they must have found shelter somewhere.

"But oh, why should they have left us?" was their constant question, to which he could but reply,—

"It is impossible to say, amid the sudden contingencies of such a terrible day as this."

The noise and hubbub were increasing fast; for now the mutineers of the revolted 11th and 20th, with all the released convicts, felons, police, and rabble of Meerut, were passing across the pontoon bridge of the Jumna, which swayed and surged in the stream beneath the rush of their feet, and then they passed cheering, with bayonets fixed, through the precincts of the palace, the gates of which were thrown open to receive them; and soon after, between the mainguard and St. James's Church, the 3rd Light Cavalry came riding towards the Cashmere Gate with yells of

"Deen—deen and dhurrum!"—(faith and religion)—"death to the Feringhees! Down with Koompanie Jan and Jan Bool! Death to the Lord Sahib Bahadoor! Why should his people rule over us, when we are a thousand where they are but one? Death—death—their raj is at an end!"

"Advance, Ripley, and cut these fellows off!" said Brigadier Graves.

With two field guns and the 54th Regiment marching in perfect order, the Colonel advanced resolutely towards the Cashmere Gate, where by a long before preconcerted plan, the whole rank and file of the battalion, after flatly refusing to fire, rushed to one side, leaving in the centre of the way their line of officers, at whom the cavalry made a furious dart, cutting some down, or firing their pistols right into the eyes of others, amid shouts of—

"Shabash! shabash!"—(well done! well done!)

Colonel Ripley shot two before he fell covered with wounds, but calling to his men in Hindostance, with his last breath—

"Mapert-Ka-Pultan—my children, my children, beware of treason! beware of falsehood!"

It was just as the sergeant, Pershad Sing, had stated on that night in the Dewan-Khana, the 54th would not assassinate their own officers, but had not the least objection to look quietly on while any other corps did it for them; so by this villainous quibble thus perished poor Colonel Ripley, Captains Smith and Burrowes, Lieutenants Edwards, Waterhill, Butler, and others, while the 38th and 74th stood still in their ranks; and it must have been a time of the keenest anxiety to their officers, whose turn was soon to come; for in those ranks of dark and sombre visages, those black and gleaming eyes, no ray of mercy or of human pity shone.

The 3rd Cavalry, all of whom were in their full uniform, silver grey, faced with orange, many of them wearing silver medals, now dismounted and went through the ranks of the 54th, fraternising and shaking hands with them; while Pershad Sing seized the Colonel's horse, taking the reins actually out of his dead hand, and assumed command of the regiment.

"Ah! good Heavens, they are firing, and—and men are falling!" cried Flora Leslie, covering her eyes when this terrible scene began.

"The villains! the work of murder has, indeed, begun!" exclaimed Harrower, who was looking through his field-glass, and could distinctly see the whole details of the butchery of the 54th officers, some of whom were slain almost in the presence of their wives and children, who were in the Flagstaff Tower.

Horace Eversly alone escaped, but was followed by a young trooper, who seemed mad with bhang and fury. Sorely pressed by this fellow, and on foot, with only his sword, Eversly, who could look for no aid from the other two regiments, halted and turned upon his pursuer, who tried to dash his horse right over him, but he sprang nimbly on one side, and, as the horseman passed, drove his sword right through his body.

The young Sowar had evidently considered himself invulnerable, as he wore upon his sword-arm a Mohammedan amulet—a verse of the Koran—to guard him from evil; but Eversly's sword went clean through it and his body together, and then the horse galloped away towards the Pirghyb Mosque, with the body dangling in the stirrups, while Eversly hurried breathlessly into the Flagstaff Tower.

"Mellon, didn't Eversly show genuine pluck there?" said Harrower, ere he joined them.

"Yet how often we laughed at that fellow when he first joined the 54th, with his straw-coloured kids, and his face pearl powdered in the hot weather."

"Well, you see that a dandy—even a snob, as we deemed him—may show true British pluck at times."

"When bothered to desperation," added Doyle.

"Welcome, Horace," cried Dicky Rivers; "by Jove! you put that Pandy's vital pump out of order in splendid style!"

Eversly came among them looking pale and breathless, his uniform torn and splashed with the blood of his poor brother officers, whose corpses were lying unheeded on the roadway, while their men now rushed to join those of Meerut, who were still pouring fast into the city through the walls and gates of the royal palace.

Now came the roar of cannon from the arsenal, and a storm of musketry replied.

Every boom of a field-piece, every crashing volley, every sharp ring of an Enfield rifle, caused a pang in the hearts of those poor

women and girls who were penned up like sheep in the Flagstaff Tower; each might be the death-blow, or each fiendish Indian shout might be the knell of one they loved; and Harrower's men leaned on their loaded rifles, and looked grimly and impatiently on, like caged lions, each peering through a loophole with a frown on his sun-burned visage, as he surveyed the long white line of the city wall, where now, wreathing up between the slender minarets and gilded domes, the smoke of the conflict and of many a burning house ascended into the clear atmosphere.

Amid all the excitement and horror of this scene, the slaughter of the poor fellows of the 54th Regiment, at whose hospitable mess they had spent so many happy evenings, Harrower and Mellon had but one thought, one anxiety—how to save the women committed to their care, and more especially the two Westons, for they knew and said to each other that if the 38th and 74th revolted next, all hope would then be over. All would inevitably be lost!

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MASSACRE.

WITH wild cheers and shrill halloos the Infantry Mutineers had passed through the palace into the city, under the very eyes of the aiding and abetting King of Delhi, Mohammed Bahadoor Shah, of his sons Mirza Mogul and Mirza Abubeker, and his grandson, while Baboo Bulli Sing had now unfurled the royal jerryput—the long unused royal standard of the Mogul dynasty, which had never been displayed since 1803, when Sir Arthur Wellesley—the future Duke of Wellington—swept the Mahrattas from the plains of Assaye, and conquered Delhi and Agra.

The brave and resolute Willoughby was in the arsenal, which stood midway between the college and the royal palace. All the natives of the establishment had deserted to the mutineers, and he was left with only three British soldiers, yet he had all the gates and approaches closed and barricaded, for he was resolved to defend his post to the last, as he well knew that the magazine

of Delhi was one of the most important in India, that it contained three hundred pieces of cannon, twenty thousand stand of arms, two hundred thousand shot and shell, with a vast quantity of powder; therefore he was determined to blow the whole place up, rather than allow all this valuable material of war to fall into the hands of the rebels.

Inside the gate leading to the magazine, he had planted two cannons, loaded with grape; a single British soldier stood by each, with orders to fire them the moment the barrier was forced; and then to join him within the magazine, where he was posted with only one other European!

These four men, isolated in that perilous place, continued to load and fire the cannon of the arsenal, round after round, steadily as if on parade, sweeping the approaches thereto, though a heavy fire was opened on them within fifty yards, by a horde of fanatics, led by the dervish, the Fakir Gunga Rai, and several native officers; many fell, but the two former seemed to have charmed lives.

"Glory to the God of Islam, and glory to the Prophet!" shouted the dervish, brandishing his lathee; "cut the white-faced Feringhees to pieces!"

But Willoughby did not give in, until he and his three companions were all more or less wounded by musket-balls, when, after killing by grape and canister more than five hundred of the assailants, he gave the order to fire the magazine!

The train was lighted, while he and his three companions, worn with fatigue, and bleeding from wounds, escaped by the sally-port that opened towards the river, and unseen reached the troops who were still under arms near the Cashmere Gate.

Ere this the entire roof of the arsenal seemed to rise into the air; a broad sheet of bright-coloured vapour, that from flaming yellow deepened into lurid black, shot upward like a pyramid to the sky; there was a mighty roar as if the earth was splitting, while the ground shook and trembled beneath the feet of the 38th and 74th, at the Cashmere Gate, as the powder exploded and thousands of casks, rockets, and live shells went off with a stunning and ear-deafening sound.

Then, save for the noise of falling stones and fragments of iron, clods of earth, and the shattered corpses of many of the assailants, all seemed to become still, while a dark and vapoury cloud rested over all Delhi, and through it, the slender minarets and gilded domes of the palace, and the great mosque, seemed to glimmer in the red light of the evening sun.

The explosion of the magazine now drove the 38th and 74th into open mutiny.

The Mohammedan war-shout of "deen! deen!" rang on all sides, and the sound of shots followed, as the soldiers of the older regiment proceeded deliberately to shoot down their own

officers, and the piercing cries of these poor men were echoed by the lamentations of the ladies in the Flagstaff Tower.

Major Abbot, who commanded a wing of the 74th, was a special favourite with his soldiers, and he implored them to follow him, and save the perishing officers of the 38th.

"It is no use, Major Sahib," said they sullenly; "they are all killed now—we can save none but you—you, at least, shall not die."

They then threw themselves in a circle round him, interposing their own persons between many a bullet and bayonet, as they hurried him away from the city gate towards the now deserted cantonments, and at that moment a number of carriages and buggies were seen being driven at full speed along the road that leads to Kurnaul.

"These are some officers flying for their lives," said the sepoys; "follow their example, while there is yet time—we can protect you no longer."

"You will at least give me the regimental colours?" said Major Abbot, who was full of sorrow and mortification.

"Take them," said they, and mounting him and a captain named Hawkey on one horse, they left him, while the other wing shot down every officer who failed to make his escape.

As the right wing fell back towards the city, it received from Harrower's men in the tower a rattling volley, which tumbled them in heaps over each other, killed or wounded.

Bleeding, and well-nigh exhausted, poor Lieutenant Willoughby endeavoured to reach Meerut, but fell into the hands of some villagers, said to be Pindaroons, who put him to death with the utmost barbarity.

The horrors of the Delhi massacre were pretty similar to those which occurred in nearly all the great cities and stations throughout Bengal; but the destruction of the Europeans was more complete. The banks, the rich silver shops in Chandney Choke, and all public offices were plundered. Many fugitive Europeans who took shelter in the gardens of the palace were discovered, bound to the trees, and shot or sabred, by order of Baboo Sing.

The women were always stripped of their clothing, treated with every indignity, and then slowly tortured to death, or hacked at once to pieces, according to the fancy of their captors. Poor little children were dashed on the pavement, ripped open, or quartered alive by the ferocious 3rd Cavalry (a corps chiefly of Mohammedans), and, like other mutineers, they were barbarously studious that such cruelties should be inflicted before death closed the eyes of their fathers and mothers, who were always slaughtered next. "No mercy was shown to age or sex. Delicate women were stripped to the skin, turned thus into the streets, beaten with bamboos, pelted with filth, and abandoned to the

vile lusts of blood-stained miscreants, until death or madness terminated their unutterable woe." To possess one drop of European blood, or to be suspected of being a Christian, was sufficient to insure a merciless death.

While chaos reigned in Delhi, where the roar of many a conflagration mingled with the shouts of riot and despair, while volumes of dusky vapour hung over it like a thunder cloud, and while all perished who failed to escape or find temporary concealment, Harrower's Enfield rifles protected the women and children in the Flagstaff Tower, ignorant, however, that a few others were lurking in the main guard, near the Cashmere Gate. But, though his men fired on every native, without distinction, who came within their range, and very efficiently kept their own vicinity clear, he was not without great anxiety, as the evening progressed, that the place might be assaulted by the united forces of the mutineers, who could bring several batteries of artillery against it, or use the great scaling-ladders, with which they had been most amply supplied by Mohammed Shah, from the arsenal of the palace.

And now, with all his anxiety, there swelled up in Jack's tough English heart something of the glorious enthusiasm of a crusader, a knight of old, fighting for Christian women and helpless children against infidels and savage heathens—the enemies alike of God, of humanity, and innocence.

All who could procure carriages of any description freely shared them with others; thus many had fled by the Kurnaul road, while Harrower's men, by a fire from the tower, even at ten hundred yards' range, effectually prevented any decided pursuit.

"Don't spare the devils, but let us kill the whole *rookawn* of them, if we can!" said Doyle, whose keen Irish eyes were sparkling with the fire of excitement and genuine courage.

"Jack's men, with their long Enfields, certainly play old gooseberry with every Pandy who comes within a thousand yards of them. I saw Sergeant Ryder knock one nigger over at eight hundred yards, and he must have been hit in the head, for he jumped like a buck as he fell; but it is horrible work this!" added Rivers.

"Hah! the Pandies can use the greased cartridges, *now*, without compunction or fear of losing caste, the lying scoundrels!" exclaimed Harrower, grimly.

"They hate us as a monkey hates snuff, or as the devil hates holy water, so don't spare lead on them!" shouted Doyle, as a few mounted sowars, in the silver-grey uniform, appeared near the tower, riding towards the cantonments; "level low, men, for some of these Enfields dthraw more than eight pounds on the thrigger."

Doyle's brogue seemed to become deeper as he grew excited.

"The moon will soon be rising," he added; "and then, by the

great hill of Howth, we'll have a lovely night for fighting the niggers!"

Though many ladies had effected their escape towards Kurnaul, and quitted the tower in safety, others yet remained, and among these were Lena and Kate, for two reasons. Their carriage and horses had been stolen by the native driver, and neither of the sisters could be prevailed upon to seek refuge in flight with other friends, while a mystery hung over the fate of their father and Polly; moreover, in spite of all he could urge, Kate insisted that at such a juncture her place was by her husband's side.

Almost the last who drove away from the tower for Kurnaul were a medical officer and his wife—the former with his jaws shattered by a musket-shot, with which a sepoy of his own regiment had favoured him; and about a dozen of ladies, with several children, alone remained in Harrower's care, when the hour of six in the evening tolled for the last time from the distant spire of St. James's church.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CASHMERE GATE.

JUST about the hour mentioned, a cart, drawn by a team of bullocks, and escorted by a few fugitive white drummers of the Sepoy Brigade, a mounted officer and some civilians, all looking grimy, bloody, scared, and bewildered, passed northward near the Flagstaff Tower. Colonel Rudkin rode beside it.

"What is in the waggon?" asked Harrower, who came to the gate of the tower.

"Hush!" said Rudkin, stooping from his saddle, "it contains the murdered officers of the 54th."

The cart was covered with the silk and muslin skirts of ladies' dresses, but a pale and bloody face, or limb, protruding here and there, told in unmistakable language the appalling and ghastly nature of the load beneath.

"Are *all* the corpses in that waggon those of the 54th men?" asked Harrower, with uncontrollable anxiety.

"All—some are cruelly mangled; but why do you ask?"

"No matter," replied Harrower, somewhat curtly.

The truth was that his mind was full of dread that Dr. Weston and Polly must have perished by that time, and might perhaps be in the terrible holocaust brought by Rudkin.

On learning what were the contents of this ghastly waggon, the tears, cries, and lamentations of the ladies in the tower were excited, and Eversly, almost the sole survivor of his brother officers, was roused to a pitch of fury.

Harrower lifted one of the dresses, and looked for a moment at the pile below. The faces, the voices, the jollity of past happy hours, came sadly and fiercely back to memory. Dead now, and gashed horribly with many a wanton wound, they yet seemed very calm and still, each man with the seal of God on his brow, and the coming night alone to keep vigil over them.

"Well, Captain Harrower," said Rudkin, with his cold habitual smile, "for those who love soldiering for the mere fun of the thing and pay fancy prices for their commissions, *sub rosâ*, by Jove this is a change with a vengeance!"

Harrower, with a sigh, let the bloodstained skirt drop, and turned with some irritation of manner to the colonel, who, before he could speak, said,—

"Brigadier Graves desires me to give you a special order, to be executed with care and decision. You will draw off your men, and escort the ladies here, to join others who are now at the Cashmere Gate."

"Heavens!" said Jack, hopefully; "Dr. Weston and Polly may be *there!*"

"I think not—at least I have not seen them," replied Rudkin; "we are instantly to retreat—to abandon the place and endeavour to reach Meerut, where the Queen's Dragoon Guards and a battalion of the Rifles are still cantoned."

Rudkin then wheeled round his horse and galloped off. Even at that crisis he had perhaps no wish to see the face of Lena Weston again.

The dusk was closing in now, and night would come on at once. Harrower by sound of bugle drew off his men, and brought all the ladies out of the tower, surrounded them with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets, and repeatedly the brave fellows strove to assure the ladies that no danger could accrue to them, while one of them had bullet in his pouch or remained alive.

Harrower gave his arm to Lena; Kate was, of course, with Mellon and Rivers, while Sergeant Ryder carried little Willie on his shoulder, and almost every second soldier was encumbered by the care of some one's child or valuables. All the poor ladies were bewildered and terror-stricken, and behaved like automatons, but their anguish increased as they drew near the Cashmere Gate, where the ground was thickly strewn with dead bodies,

some of them being those of officers of the 38th and 74th, their own friends and acquaintances.

Pat Doyle strove by affected lightness of heart—even by attempted jokes—to keep up the spirits of the poor ladies; but all his efforts were ghastly.

"By the powers, these will be fine times for crocodiles and alligathors—there will be lots of high caste corpses swimming down the river to the Ganges."

No one responded to this remark, but as a shell came soaring through the air towards them, describing a fiery arc, he shouted,—

"Take care, ladies—look out, boys! here comes a whistling-dick; duck down—duck down, or by the holy trout of Kilgavower, there'll be promotion in heaven or on earth for some of us."

It hissed harmlessly past, and exploded near the Moree gate, about a quarter of a mile distant.

There were no other means of conveyance now for the ladies and a large party of civilians and officers who were now collected in the main guard, an enclosure within the Cashmere Gate, but a few light gun-carriages, to which horses of various kinds were hastily traced.

"Form line across the street, Frank, and open a fire upon all who approach between the Church and the Treasury," cried Harrower to Temple; "cover the rear, while I assist the ladies. Mellon, your men will fall in on the left of ours."

"All right, Jack," replied Rowley.

"Oh my papa!—oh my sister—lost—lost—lost!" cried Lena and Kate together, as they were placed during the scrambling arrangement that ensued, on separate gun-carriages, all the seats or ammunition boxes of which were already crowded, back and front, with fugitives, chiefly women and children.

The orders given to drivers were simply to lash their horses furiously, to make a dash past the Moora Bastion or north-east angle of the walls of Delhi, for a ford of the Jumna, and then to gallop along the Meerut road, past the Doab canal and on by Tahurpoor.

Riding at a sharp hand gallop, Colonel Rudkin was already showing the way, and all the clattering fieldpieces, with their terrified and unhappy freight, at once were put in motion.

At the very moment when Harrower was whispering some words—he scarcely knew what—of comfort and farewell to Lena, adding that he would soon be after her, with all his men double-quick—there burst forth a sudden roar and blaze of musketry, chiefly in their rear and on the right flank. A garland of fire seemed to flash along the walls from the Cashmere Gate to the sharp angle of the Moora Bastion, and amid many a stifled shriek, Jack heard the sharp ping-ping-pinging of the conical rifle-

bullets, as they tore past his ear, for now the merciless sepoys had opened from the streets and ramparts a murderous fusillade upon the line of gun-carriages and their helpless occupants.

The worst anticipations—the most gloomy forebodings of poor old Dr. Weston seemed now on the eve of being realized.

An immense number of defenceless beings were killed or wounded; horses were shot in the traces, and the carriages and tumbrils were overturned, crushing and mutilating those who sat on them.

The gun to which Harrower half-clung as he spoke to Lena—a brass twelve-pounder—was swept away by the terrified horses at full speed, he knew not whither. To save himself from being dashed to pieces, he clung to an iron ring of the seat with one hand, and with the other held her firmly on the hard cushion of the ammunition box. Several ladies fell off the guns, under the influence of wounds or terror, and not a few because their children had fallen from their weary and now feeble hands.

The two drivers had been shot in their saddles, and the body of one yet hung in the stirrups, while the four maddened and terrified animals rushed on at full speed, and Harrower felt as if in a dream or nightmare.

Crashing down a rocky path, they thundered over a wooden bridge of the canal near the Moora Bastion, over the flat reedy space that lies beyond, and they plunged into the Jumna, at a place where, fortunately, at that season, as the rains had not commenced, it was somewhat shallow. There two ladies—who they were, neither Lena nor Harrower knew—fell off the ammunition boxes, and were swept away; and when the horses dragged the gun up the opposite bank it stuck fast in the dense jungle, and Harrower found himself alone in a wild place—alone with Lena Weston, who was half fainting, half hysterical, and perfectly helpless in his hands.

In almost every direction round them incendiary fires were visible—European bungalows, the solitary dwellings of ryots and zemindars, with haystacks and even groves of trees, were given to the flames, as the property of those who favoured the Feringhees, or were worth plundering, and these lurid glares rivalled in brilliance the light of the cloudless moon.

Delhi was some miles distant now, but still the boom of cannon came on the night air, and the flash of an occasional musket could be seen near the bend of the river, where the house of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe stood, for though Harrower knew it not until long after, many of the poor ladies, officers, and soldiers, who had flung themselves off the guns when the firing of the sepoys first began, had crossed the ditch near the Cashmere Gate, by scrambling up the scarp on the opposite side, and fled on foot straight north. Many perished in the main-guard, many more were shot down, but a few reached Metcalfe House, and escaped

across the river Jumna just as the pursuers burst into the grounds, destroying, burning, and bayoneting, like fiends as they were, urged on by Gunga Rai, and other fakirs, who were shouting,—

"Hunt and slay—hunt and slay the Feringhees! Strike, Mohammedans, for Islam—strike, Hindoos, for Vishnu! death to the kafirs—the *ghora-logue* (white people), may their wives and daughters be defiled!"

It was through the grounds of Metcalfe House that the survivors of Harrower's and Mellon's party effected their retreat, and ultimately reached Meerut; but all who from weakness or wounds fell into the hands of the sepoys, were instantly destroyed, for the massacres of the ferocious Septembrisers, and the horrors of the Sicilian vespers, were acted anew that night in Delhi.

Ignorant as yet that the mutiny was so general over all the Province, Harrower did not feel the despair which the situation of himself and of his delicate companion might otherwise have inspired. She felt as if she was the last of all her race—assured now that Kate and Mellon—even little Willie, must have perished, and that happy and joyous lad, Dicky Rivers, too!

Harrower felt only a tiger-like longing for vengeance on the mutineers, at whose hands he had lost so many friends, and who had wrought so much misery to so many innocent and helpless people.

There was, however, an immediate necessity for the preservation and concealment of himself and Miss Weston, and for having her deposited in safety, either at Meerut or at Kurnaul, which was eighty miles distant, for the idea of returning to Delhi was simply madness; and how were they to travel, weary, worn, sick at heart, and afoot, in a land swarming with enemies?

If Mellon or others had not saved poor Kate by this time, she was too probably lost in that vortex of ruin and slaughter—the City of Delhi; and if Doctor Weston and Polly had not found a safe shelter in the palace of the Moguls, their fate must have been sealed ere the eve of that terrible day!

As yet, Harrower knew not, and none in India, save the revolters, knew that the old king of Delhi was one of the secret springs of the mutiny; thus many of our poor fugitives fled to his palace for refuge in perfect confidence, and were butchered within its walls, by order of Mirza Mogul, Mirza Abubeker, and Baboo Sing.

Harrower took the loaded pistols from the holsters of one of the artillery horses, as an addition to his six-chambered colt, and untracing the animal, lifted Lena into the saddle. He then filled up his flask—which luckily was half full of brandy—with water, and leading the horse by the bridle, set forth in search of a road, after throwing across the crupper—by that foresight and expedience

peculiar to the soldier, the sailor, and the colonist—a couple of artillery cloaks, which he unstrapped from the seats of the gun.

Proceeding due north, in silent grief and horror for the events of the day, he turned his back on Delhi, though the eyes of his moaning and sobbing companion remained fixed on where the red flames were yet rising in the moonlight, for there she deemed lay the tomb of all her family!

CHAPTER XXIX.

ANARCHY.

NOT one day, nor many days, saw an end of the cruelties that ensued in the city, when the mutineers found themselves fully in power, and joined by the lower order of the populace, many thousands in number; and the torture of such British subjects as were discovered from time to time was ingeniously protracted.

The times of Timour, the destroyer, seemed to have come again in Delhi!

A few unhappy English people, among whom were Judge Leslie, Mrs. Patna Rhys, and her daughter (still attired in white silk and lace, as one of Kate's bridesmaids), took shelter in a mosque, where for several days, they lurked without food or water, till in despair, they called to a soubadar, who was passing with a party of sepoys.

These fellows halted at the door and peeped in, being doubtful of the number there, and how they might be armed.

"Death at once," said Mr. Leslie, "is better than the constant prospect of death—the dread of an impending tragedy; moreover, I have lost my daughters, and have no wish to survive them!"

Happily for the poor man, he knew not *how* his daughters perished in the open streets close by!

"Surrender!" cried the soubadar.

"Give us your oaths—your sacred promises, that you will give us water," said the judge, "and that you will take us all to the king of Delhi—to Mahommed Shah, who may kill us if he pleases,"

"We promise on our souls!" cried the sepoys; "but first surrender your arms."

"We have but two empty muskets," replied the judge, who was faint and sick with thirst.

The arms were handed out. Then the sepoys fixed their bayonets and brought forth the melancholy prisoners—eight ladies, eight gentlemen, and eleven children, all in the agonies of thirst and utter exhaustion, and deliberately they placed them all in a row under a burning sun. Mrs. Rhys, who had an infant in her arms, implored the soubadar to give it a little water, and to take her own life as the price of the gift; but the barbarian snatched the poor babe from her breast, and dashed it on the ground head foremost.

"Oh, Father in Heaven!" shrieked the poor mother, attempting to throw herself over the quivering body of the child, but she was thrust back by a charged bayonet; a few volleys followed, and they were all left together in a gory heap, under the hot meridian sun.

The king, the princes, and leaders, seized upon the British Treasury, containing more than half a million sterling; but they seized upon more than that: "forty-eight females, most of them girls from ten to fourteen years, many being delicately nurtured ladies, were kept for the base purposes of the leaders of the insurrection for a whole week." At the end of that time, their clothes were rent from them, and they were surrendered to the lowest ruffians in Delhi, to abuse in the streets in the open light of day. Fingers, breasts, and noses were cut off; "one lady was three days dying; they flayed the face of another, and made her walk through the streets, perfectly nude," according to a native eye-witness.

As we shall ere long show, Mellon was one of those, who was borne away by the tide of fugitives towards Meerut. In the dark and confusion, he had lost sight of Kate, and Lena too; he knew not whether they had escaped and found concealment, or been shot or captured, and the emotions with which he heard such tidings as these can only be imagined, but never described.

To what power could these poor captive women and children appeal for protection now? for even the old law of the Moguls had become a dead letter. Though nothing could be less calculated to remedy the abuses of Government, or the spirit of tyranny and degradation of woman, which last is one of the essences of Islamism, there had been a species of jurisprudence once in the Mohammedan kingdom of Delhi; but it was chiefly made up from the additions put to the Koran, or, rather, the traditions admitted by the Suni as applied by Abu Hanifa, a jurisconsult, whose authority was supreme in India, as it is now in Turkey, though steam, gas, and electricity, together with

brandy and bitter beer, are likely to knock his system all to pieces.

To the brutal Mussulman and sensual Hindoo, the position occupied by an English lady, or any Christian woman, seems absurd and incomprehensible; and hence came the mad desire to insult, degrade, and torture, ere they slew them.

Like all heathens, they regard women merely as an animal—a little more pleasing, much more ornamental, but not quite so useful as a horse. It is through the sublime influence of Christianity alone, that she occupies a place of almost perfect equality with man; and that position she owes to the religion and the chivalry of the older ages of the world—to the tender devotion of the early Christians, and to much of that which sectarians in the present day stigmatize as Mariolatry.

Many of the Hindoo women bitterly mocked the dying misery of ours, and of their children; but what could be the maternal love of females, who, as a sacrifice to the Ganges, the Jumna, or the Indus, can at times set their infants afloat in a basket, and quietly watch them while born away by the current, and feel a glow of fanatical joy, if an alligator opens its huge jaws for a meal, for then they know that their sacrifice has been gratefully accepted by Mahadeva!

Mirza Mogul, who had ordered the strictest search to be made for the two missing daughters of "Padre Weston Sahib, dead or alive," was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the fast increasing army; Mirza Abubeker was made general of the cavalry, and many native officers were promoted to high commands.

Shumshoodeen Khan, the hideous trooper, deserter, and ex-Thug, was appointed Rissaldar of the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry; Pershad Sing became Colonel of the 54th Native Infantry, and various havildars and naicks became captains, majors, and so forth; for promotion and plunder, loot and lust, were the order of the day in Delhi, where the old King Mohammed Bahadoor Shah, then past his ninetieth year, and, like his sons, an active abettor and suggestor of the atrocities, was proclaimed, amid the thunder of several hundred pieces of cannon, the King, Emperor, Padishah, and reigning sovereign of all India, and, as such, he made a state procession through the streets of the city, on the third day after the massacre, surrounded by sepoys, many of whom wore the war medals given to them by Queen Victoria, and preceded by elephants, with towers on their backs, full of dancing girls, and so forth, glittering with jewellery and gorgeous silks, and amid the mingled roar of gongs, drums, and the yells of a vast multitude.

CHAPTER XXX.

KATE'S WEDDING NIGHT.

THE brilliant bridal party which had assembled in the church of Dr. Weston on that eventful 11th of May, was now scattered far and wide, or lying gashed and gory, dead and mutilated, a prey to jackals and vultures in the streets and gardens of Delhi.

Singularly enough, by the direction of chance, Harrower and Lena were together; Dr. Weston and Polly were prisoners in the palace when the massacre began, and Mellon, in sullen despair, with his men, the Brigadier, Colonel Rudkin, and others, were retreating along Meerut road.

But Kate—where was she?

The bride—the newly-wedded wife of a few hours of terror and carnage! Poor Rowley Mellon would have given his heart's blood to learn that she was safe and untouched, for his agonized mind was full of the most horrible imaginings. Her bridesmaids and friends—alas! more than one of these were among the ill-fated forty-eight girls mentioned in the last chapter.

The horses of the gun-carriage on which Mellon had placed her, and all those who sat with her on the ammunition boxes, had fallen killed or wounded when the sepoys opened from the walls that terrible fire upon the fugitives. She fell from her seat, and lay stunned, confused, and perfectly still under the wheels of the fieldpiece.

After a time—some hours, perhaps—all was silent, terribly silent, around her; then she rose, and in terror of seeing so many corpses near, fled, in her bewilderment, into the town, passing through the Cashmere Gate, which was standing open and quite unguarded, for none kept watch and ward there now, save the dead.

She had on a dark dress, and mud and dust had rendered her sweet face and delicate hands almost as black as those of a negro. Though seldom, or never, afoot in the streets of Delhi, still she knew the city well, and mechanically took the way towards their own residence—poor, trembling girl! whither else could she turn?—in the frail hope of finding her father and Polly, either alive or dead; "But of all the forms of despair," says a writer truly,

"perhaps the most pitiable is that which persists in disguising itself as *hope*."

Unnoticed, and keeping as much as possible in the dark shadow of the houses, she passed the church of St. James, which, like her father's chapel, had been demolished, and on the ruins of which the Dervish Falladeen had placed a bamboo rod, having affixed thereto a scrap of paper, on which was written the following lines from the 24th chapter of the Koran:—

"As to the unbelievers, their works are like a vapour in a plain, which the thirsty traveller thinketh to be water, until when he cometh thereto he findeth it to be nothing."

Beyond lay the College and the dreadful *débris* of the exploded magazine, the long *façade* of the beautiful palace closing the vista, its walls now gay with a glare of torches and those curious fireworks, in the manufacture of which the Orientals excel; and all its windows, domes, and towers rendered distinct by the glare of countless Indian lights, white and crimson, orange, green, and yellow, for this fatal 11th of May was evidently a night of rejoicing with the princes of the Mogul dynasty.

More than once an involuntary shuddering cry escaped her as she stumbled over a dead body; but now the sound of excited voices and the rush of footsteps made her shrink aside and run into a dark and narrow alley, past the end of which she could see by the light of the moon a fugitive, half stripped and bleeding—some hapless Englishman, who had been tracked out and discovered, flying like a hare pursued by a pack of hounds, for close behind, with flashing sabres and tulwars, came his destroyers.

There were times when she almost doubted her own identity.

Was she really the same Kate Weston who only that morning had stood at the altar by the side of Mellon, surrounded by so many gay and smiling friends, and had heard her father perform the nuptial rite?

Shuddering, and filled with awful thoughts, the poor girl wandered on past the arches of the aqueduct of Ali Merdan Khan, across the street of Silver; and further on still, when the sound of voices again made her shrink down near the ruins of a recently burned house, and there she lay long in a species of stupor.

It was in that very street where now she crouched a terror-stricken fugitive, that, according to song, romance, and tradition (when Charles II. was King of Britain), the youngest daughter of the Emperor, Lalla Rookh, when wedded to Ahdallah, of Bucharia, passed, on her departure for Cashmere, with groups of beautiful children scattering the way with roses before her.

When Kate again summoned sufficient strength to look at her watch, she found that midnight was past, and as all the thoughts of home rushed on her mind, with a torrent of indescribable grief

and bitterness, she wrung her hands and moaned over the names of those lost and loved ones she had no hope of ever meeting more; but still the craving desire to see their own house once again impelled her, she set forth, and ere long she found herself near the great Mosque of Shah Jehan, the three white marble domes and two tall minarets of which towered against the sky. The latter are each more than a hundred and thirty feet in height, and are built of alternate courses of red and black marble.

She then knew that she had proceeded only halfway on her hopeless errand, that she was still almost in the heart of the city, and now, overcome by all she had suffered, with her knees bending under her, and fearing she was about to faint, in the desperate expectation that some pious Mussulman might take pity on her extreme misery, and protect her from his more savage countrymen, or the infuriated Hindoos, she ascended the vast flight of stately steps that lead to the three great porches, and passed trembling into the mosque.

At another time she could have admired the mighty temple, under the roof of which she was now intruding; but its vastness only added to her terror, and she knew not for a time whether to advance or retire. At all events the place was so far sacred that she was safe from the Hindoos, and no Mussulman would slay her within it.

The mosque was totally empty; she shrunk into a place that was completely involved in the shadow thrown by the marble pulpit, beyond which were the numerous coloured lamps that burned round the principal shrine; and then she strove to calm the wild beatings of her heart, and to remember the prayers her good old father had taught her, and which he was wont to read every night before the family retired to rest.

She felt as if on the eve of insanity, and the strange aspect of the place in which she found herself, for the first time, added curiously to the force of such morbid imaginings.

Of vast height and breadth, this mosque is two hundred and sixty feet long, and paved throughout with blocks of snow-white marble, having a broad black border. The walls and roof are also of white marble, with gorgeously carved friezes and cornices, and many brilliant lamps of chased silver, studded with precious stones, are suspended from the triple domes.

To the eyes of the unhappy Kate, all this seemed a phantasmagoria, and she closed them that she might not look upon it. She had wept so much that she could weep no more, and her eyeballs were dry and painfully hot. She was sick at heart, and lay there on the cold marble pavement watching and waiting the time of morning prayer, resolving on her knees to seek mercy and protection of the first Mohammedan who entered, or whose reverend air and gentleness of aspect might inspire her with

hope; but now a numbness, a faintness, a torpor that was not sleep, though somewhat like, it stole over her, and gave oblivion for a time.

On recovering from this, she felt her strength somewhat restored. The time was—as her watch informed her—the hour of three in the morning, and now the not unnatural conviction came upon her, that by being found there—especially if by some fanatical dervish—she might more surely be courting the fate she strove to avoid, as the presence of a woman, an infidel, as they deemed her, would be supposed to have polluted a holy place.

When this new terror seized her, finding all still and quiet in the streets without, she resolved to try her fate there once more, and, quitting the mosque, descended the long flight of steps and, avoiding the great entrance which is opposite to the palace, she issued through one which leads to the street that ends at the Toorkman Gate; but she had scarcely proceeded twenty paces, when a dark man in a yellow dress, too surely a native, who had been concealed in the shadow of a house, sprang forward and seized her by the arm.

A shrill cry of terror and despair escaped her, but he half stifled it by the sleeve of his dress.

"Lost—lost—lost!" moaned Kate, as she sunk on her knees by his side, for all strength had departed from her.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE GUEBER.

"HUSH! peace, and do not be alarmed," said this man, whose long yellow tunic or gaberdine, girt by a black shawl together with his high conical cap, showed that he was a Gueber, or Parsee, though he spoke very good English; "you are one of the daughters of Weston Sahib?"

"I am, have pity on me."

"And you were yesterday married to Mellon Sahib—is it not so?"

"Yes—yes;" replied Kate in tremulous accents.

"Poor child! Do you not know me?' asked the stranger.

"Alas! sir, no," said Kate, who saw that he was an old man of mild and gentle aspect, much fairer in complexion than a Hindostanee, and with a venerable white beard and pleasing countenance.

"I am Mohassan Jamsetjee, the Parsee cloth merchant, with whom Mellon Sahib lived in Chandney Choke; you have often been in my shop and house, with the two Mem Sahibs, your sisters."

"You have daughters—you are a father, I know, and you will protect me, good sir, you will save me for the sake of mine."

"At the risk of my life I shall try to proteet and save you, child," said the worthy old Parsee, who hated alike the Hindoo and the Mohammedan, being, like all his race, an industrious and peaceful trader, who had every desire in the world to see law, order, and British rule once more enforced in Delhi. He cast round him an anxious glance to see that they were unnoticed, and undoing the Cashmere shawl that formed his girdle, he placed it over her head as a disguise, and said, "Come with me this way; between these walls and gardens, we may hope to reach, unseen, my house in Chandney Choke; and once there, you will be, I hope, in perfect safety, provided you keep yourself strictly concealed."

"And you will endeavour to discover the fate of my father, of my sisters, my husband?" she implored, while her tears flowed freely again. "The torture of the suspense I am enduring is terrible!"

"I shall do all I can, but without the aid of Heaven, it may be very little."

The Parsee spoke kindly, and apparently had a genuine wish to serve her.

Poor trembling Kate; she had read Moore's "Lalla Rookh," and Voltaire's tragedy of "Les Guèbres," and she had learned all about the veiled Prophet of Khorassan and the fire-worshippers—of all the many idolatries which cumber the soil of India perhaps theirs is the most remarkable—but she never thought of being committed to the care and humanity of one of those people, as she was now, by a singular arrangement of destiny.

A temporary emotion of confidence, and the conviction that she might trust this old man, soothed her terrible agitation. She now remembered him perfectly, having often made purchases at his shop, and moreover, she, with her sisters and Dicky Rivers, had sometimes visited Mellon's rooms at his house.

"It is fortunate for you that I chanced to be abroad at this early hour; but I am only returning home after being detained all night at the house of a friend—one of my religion—who has been severely wounded and robbed by the mutineers," said he, as they proceeded through the silent streets together, with all the speed that Kate could exert.

Happily they reached his house unseen, and entered it by a back way, through the garden, thus avoiding the perils of the great street; and the affection, anxiety, and joy displayed by the family of the merchant on seeing him return, and in perfect safety, were very reassuring to Kate; though they failed to conceal the alarm her presence among them inspired, as they knew but too well that if she was discovered by any of the revolters, or their adherents, that plunder and death would be the immediate penalty of all. But the Parsee merchant was grateful to the Feringhees, whose wise laws and established order had enabled him to amass wealth, and trade in peace, and by whose energies the cruel Thugs, the destroyers of his sons, had been rooted out and swept away; he was grateful, too, to Mellon Sahib, for whose sake he resolved at all hazards to protect his fugitive wife till better times came, or until he should transmit her to her own people, if he could but get her out of Delhi.

Secresy was enjoined to all, and for the remainder of the following day Kate lay abed, feeble, prostrated, and half-stupefied by all she had seen and undergone. She only remembered that the wife of the Parsee, who bathed her temples with rose-water, had told her that she was in Mellon's room, and in Mellon's very bed—that couch around which the hideous Thugs had hovered—and that she must not raise the curtains or Venetian blinds to peep into the street, lest her fair Feringhee face might be seen by the passers without.

Then she would lie for hours with silent tears oozing from the matted lashes of her closed eyes; and from time to time she kissed the wedding ring, which "her own dear papa" had con-

secrated and Rowley had placed upon her finger, and that little mystic golden hoop was the sole link now that bound her to the world.

She found the wife and daughters of the old fire-worshipper, like all the women of those remarkable idolators, delicate, mild, and pleasing in their manner, for the gentler sex of the Gueber tribes are celebrated over all India for their many domestic virtues.

Among the fire-worshippers no conversion is ever achieved by Christian missionary, by Mohammedan dervish, or Hindoo fakir, for they adhere to their fathers' faith as rigidly as if Darius was still marching to meet Alexander, with the Sacred Fire, borne on altars of silver, before him, or as if the Great Cyrus was still seated on the throne of Persia, their native country, from whence they were driven by the conquests of the Mohammedans in the eighth century.

Thus Mohassan Jamsetjee always wore a dress of dark yellow, like the Guebers of old, and never omitted to make a low salaam to the rising sun, a custom that prevailed among our own mountaineers till a very recent period, for the worship of fire is undoubtedly the most ancient religion in the world; and he believed implicitly that his prophet Zoroaster, in his love of wisdom and virtue, led a solitary life on a mountain, which one day he found covered with the flames of a celestial fire; that he passed through them without harm, and beheld the awful form of the Deity—the Fountain of Light. But with all this, like the men of his race, Mohassan was thrifty, prudent, and industrious, for the Parsees are among the best and most enterprising men of business in India, being addicted solely to the arts of peace and of making money.

In the room occupied by Kate there yet remained some traces of Mellon's residence there; in a Japanese cabinet she found a few of his visiting cards, a Cawnpore cigar case, with a couple of cheroots in it, a stray glove, and a button of the Bengal Fusiliers, and these trifles she treasured and kept by her "as precious relics of her lost husband, her dear beloved Rowley."

Daily Mohassan Jamsetjee prosecuted his inquiries in the city concerning the family of Doctor Weston, and the probable fate of Lieutenant Mellon, but did so in vain, for if not fugitives, or concealed somewhere in those *ty-kunas* or underground houses, which are peculiar to Delhi (and have openings for light above, with only one place of entrance), they had too probably perished in the general massacre of all the Europeans.

There was still hope, however. Sir Theophilus Metcalfe had contrived to conceal himself for three days in Delhi, and escaping, after wandering for ten days in the woods and jungles, reached Hansi, which was more than one hundred and twenty miles distant,

Her family mansion was now in possession of Pershad Sing, the Hindoo havildar, now Colonel of the 54th Mapert-ka-Pultan.

"Ah, what have I done that Heaven should thus abandon me!" she would sometimes exclaim, as she wrung her hands; "shall I ever again be easy in my mind—ever again safe and happy?"

"All are safe and happy too, who are in the keeping of God, and yonder is His throne!" the old Parsee would reply, while pointing to the sun, that shone in all its Indian splendour on the gilded domes and marble towers of Delhi; "but to be simply happy, after the fashion of this earth," he added, with a smile, "our old Persian proverb says a man must have a wife from Yezdabad, eat the bread of Yezdidi, and drink wine of the grapes that grow on the plains of Shiraz."

But Kate would look at him vacantly, and wonder whether she was still in her senses, for there were moments of bewilderment in which she had doubts of her own identity.

Then she would consider that she was ungrateful to God, for she had been spared when many had perished miserably; that now her life was safe at least, and that she was tended with every care.

Her former life seemed to have been blotted out—to have passed altogether away, like a dream. The dresses, the faces, manners, and language of the Parsee's family were all novel and strange to her, and she could converse with him only, as he had learned English early in life, during his trading visits to Calcutta and elsewhere.

On returning from his tours of cautiously-made inquiry in the city, he always had some news for Kate, but it was generally of a disastrous kind; that other mutinies and massacres were occurring daily all over India, and that the revolted sepoys to the number of many, many thousands were constantly pouring into Delhi, Horse, Foot, and Artillery, with drums beating, and colours flying; that the city was fast becoming one vast garrison, and that it seemed as if ere long the whole great army of the East Indian Company would be ranked under the banner of Mohammed Bahadoor Shah. Thus even the hope of ever getting away from India began to die in the heart of Kate.

From the marble pulpit in the great mosque of Shah Jehan, Hafiz the dervish predicted to the people that the ancient glories of the Mogul dynasty would be fully renewed by the sons of the old king; that one would equal him who built Delhi, and that Abubeker would equal in piety him of the same name who bore testimony of the prophet's journey to Heaven, and smote the irreverend Jew; and yet the wretch he lauded was steeped to the very lips in the blood of our women and children.

"And now those cruel and sensual Hindoos," added Mohassan to his tidings one day, "hope fully to revive their abominable suttees which the Company and Bahadoor Sahib at Calcutta put

down, though believing not in our blessed Zoroaster, who has taught us that to consume any portion of the human body by fire is impure and impious, for it is the element which we deem symbolical of the Disposer of all things."

Then he brought her still more alarming tidings. The sepoys boasted of having killed all the Feringhee men, and that now their women, or soldiers in petticoats, sent by the Queen of England, were coming to avenge them. Of this strange intelligence Kate could make nothing, not even when Mohassan added that "Havelock Sahib and his terrible Tape-wallahs, who marched with their legs bare, were pressing on to Cawnpore and Lucknow."

What or who those Tape-wallahs were he could not tell; but the sepoys named them, he knew, the "Tumasha-Ka-Pultan," or fighting regiment.

Though the sepoy troops who were being concentrated in vast numbers in Delhi, were occasionally riotous and given to plunder —the Hindoos and Mohammedans attacking and robbing each other—the populace were calming down. The excitement consequent to hunting and cutting to pieces the English kafirs, and the torturing of their helpless women and children, by the budmashes and other ruffians of the city, was beginning to pall now; perhaps it was that no more victims could be had for outrage and butchery, so the Parsee began to conceive hopes of getting Kate Weston secretly beyond the walls, and of transmitting her by water to some quiet station lower down the provinces, where she would be more safe, and from whence she might reach Calcutta.

But now as the eleven gates of Delhi were closely guarded by the sepoy troops, the first difficulty he had to encounter was how to convey her, a white woman, out of the city; so, as necessity and danger often make men fertile in expedients, after consulting with one or two other Parsees, a plan was hit upon to baffle the suspicion of the sentinels, to get the poor fugitive safely into the country, and convey her by the Doab canal to some peaceful town.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TO THE TOWER OF SILENCE.

POOR Kate could not but shudder at the mode of escape proposed to her, and the terrible mockery of the part she had to perform—to feign that death which might already have darkened the eyes of all she loved on earth.

But it was actually suggested that she must do this, and be borne out of the city by the Parsees towards their place of interment about sunset; and the intense longing and craving once again to be among her own people, if any indeed survived, and to hear an English voice, became so strong that she consented, after being convinced that no other plan could be adopted to get her secretly out of Delhi, for if even her face was dyed, her blonde hair would certainly betray her.

Repugnant though the scheme proved to one of his naturally truthful nature, Mohassan consoled himself by reflecting that his final object was good and humane. He closed his shop, put up the shutters or drew down all the blinds of the windows and verandahs, and giving out that a kinswoman from the country had died in his house, he obtained from the kotwal or mayor—an official whom the people of Delhi now changed every day or two—a written pass, or permission to pass forth from the city with the funeral train.

They hoped to get her conveyed to a distance by water; the public roads were all infested by mutineers, thieves, and ruffians of all kinds, who rejoiced in the subversion of rule and order, and the railroads already formed, or in progress, were everywhere stopped or torn up.

The telegraph wires, and in some places the partially formed lines of rail, were destroyed by the advice of such pastors as the dancing dervish Falladeen and the fakir Gunga Rai—all classes and creeds seemed to conspire for the destruction of these great elements of progress and civilization introduced by the Kafirs. Round shot and grape were fired through the locomotives, of the actual nature or vital powers of which the natives were somewhat doubtful, while their aspect and noises filled them with mysterious awe.

"That accursed iron-horse of the Feringhees," said Mirza

Mogul, "that car of fire, swifter than the Ekkas of our fathers, which puffs and pants and whistles along a road of iron, blackening the sky with odious smoke, scaring even the serpent and the tiger in the jungle, shall no more run straight through everything, ripping up the graves of Mohammedans, polluting the temples of Brahma, extinguishing the sacred fires of the Guebers, desecrating the Holy Forests of the Khonds and respecting nothing. Death to it!"

So Mohammed Bukht Khan, the rebel soubadar of the regiment of Artillery, and his gholandazees, with their twelve-pounder guns, knocked the locomotives to pieces about Agra and elsewhere.

The day of her projected escape from Delhi was one of deep anxiety to Kate, though she scarcely dared to hope that now she was leaving one relation alive, or even a friend behind her there, save the family of the kind and gentle Parsee.

She knew the place towards which she was to be borne, and felt a chill of terror at the recollection of it. Often with Mellon, and merry, laughing Dicky Rivers—when such a melancholy state of affairs, or such an expedition as that now projected, could not have been foreseen—she had ridden by chance—never by design—near the hideous and barbarous cemetery, where the small community of Parsees in Delhi *left*—for they do not inter—their dead. The body is simply borne forth on a bier, and deposited in a certain place allotted for that purpose, a circle paved with stones, or the summit of a tower covered by an iron grating. There it is stripped, laid out, and committed to the elements, and to the beaks and claws of the birds of prey, which are always to be seen in great numbers hovering over the mournful spot. The Parsees go no more near the place if they can avoid it, and, singularly enough, regard with horror the Mohammedans, who reverently lay their dead in the earth, never more to be disturbed, and the Hindoos, who cast theirs into rivers, preferring a Golgotha, such as those Towers of Silence (as they are named), so common in Bombay, where more of their tribe are collected than in other parts of India.

The eventful day of her departure was indeed one of intense solicitude and dread to Kate; but the eight Parsees who assembled for the mock funeral, were in excellent spirits, and talked merrily enough, though she knew not a word they said; but their thoughts and topics were all of merchandise and making money; of dealings in tea, coffee, sugar and rice, ivory and bullion; of perfumes and spices; of Canton silks, Cashmere shawls, Dacca muslin, and Indian gauze; of jewelled weapons, silver hookahs, and so forth, till the sound of the gongs or ghurries at the distant gates, as the sentinels struck the hour, announced that the time had come for setting forth, as in a short space the sun would be sinking far away beyond Meerut.

"When last at the Tower of Silence," said one of the Parsees, "it was to leave there my beloved son. I left you to watch, Mohassan."

"Yes—the birds of the air tore out both eyes at *once*."

"So that I could not augur whether he was in future happiness or misery. Ah, had the right eye been taken first!"*

"But think of *my* beloved sons," said Mohassan; "no Tower of Silence received them; they found their graves in the water, like the idolatrous Hindoos, for they perished at the hands of the accursed Thugs. Oh, blessed be the wise English, for rooting out that brood of hell!"

How wildly Kate's heart beat when the wife and daughters of Mohassan Jamsetjee kissed and bade her farewell, after arraying her in a long white robe, which completely covered her from head to foot, veiling even her face. A little shuddering cry escaped her when she stretched herself on the bier, which had six handles, and was formed entirely of iron, as wood is deemed too sacred for such a use, being consecrated to the god of fire.

Mohassan and five other Parsees, entirely clothed in white, now lifted the bier; the house door was opened and shut, and then by the change of temperature, Kate, after the lapse of many weeks, found herself once more in the streets of Delhi, but borne through them with a slow and measured pace on a Parsee bier, and not bowling along in the well-hung carriage, or riding her favourite grey pad.

The atmosphere was hot, though the time was evening, yet Kate felt in a cold perspiration with the fear of discovery, and of greater dangers that might still await her. As they proceeded through the streets, past the sellers of sherbet from China jars, water-carriers with their huge leathern bottles, dealers in sweetmeats, pipe-sticks, and tobacco, men with hunting cheetahs for sale; and onward amid all the din and general bustle of Chandney Chokc, to reach that fatal place, the Cashmere Gate, Katc Mellon—for so she must now be named—felt her heart at times sink very low indeed; there was a singing in her ears, a mist before her eyes, a shuddering terror of her whole situation, a total doubt and ignorance of whither she was to be conveyed ultimately, and with whom; and times there were when a kind of stupor seemed to freeze her faculties.

From one of those fits she was roused by finding the bier laid hastily on the ground, and a kind of altercation in Hindostanee going on around her. They had reached the Cashmere Gate, but the havildar of the guard, which was composed of sepoys of the 74th Bengal Infantry, made some difficulty about permitting the supposed funeral party to pass out, for there is a natural antago-

* Concerning these superstitions, see Bohn's "India," App.

nism between the Parsees, the Mohammedans, and the Hindoos, and in this time of total misrule, they were pretty free to indulge their spirit of pettiness, and show openly how cordially they hated each other in secret.

"Whom have you here?" growled the havildar, relinquishing his hubble-bubble with impatience.

"A woman of my household—salaam, sahib."

"Salaam to you—dead?"

"Woe to the mournful day! Why should we be here, else?"

"Let me see her face."

"Sacrilege!" cried all the Parsees together, with uplifted hands, and in a gust of terror, that was by no means feigned, they appealed to a native officer, who wore large gold epaulettes and a colonel's uniform. He was loitering near, but he only mocked their anxiety, and anathematized them as "infidels and Kafirs."

Encouraged by this, the lawless havildar, who seemed in a mood for rough jesting, said,—

"If she is dead, I may at least, without crime, pass my sword once through her body, to assure myself of the truth of what you say."

"Sacrilege! sacrilege!" cried the whole of the Parsees, interposing between the sergeant and Kate, who, luckily for herself, scarcely knew what was passing.

"Accursed idolators!" cried the havildar, "do you not feed the vultures, and other foul birds of the air with your dead, and what greater desecration can there be in the clean stab of a Mohammedan's sword?"

He unsheathed and brandished the weapon as he spoke, so a multitude began to collect immediately.

"Aga sahib," cried Mohassan, appealing again to the native colonel, in the deepest anxiety, "read this permission to pass forth to our Tower of Silence—it bears the signature and seal of the Kotwal of Delhi."

"Do you mean those of Assim Ali Khan, lately a naick of the 54th Mapert-ka-Pultan?"

"No, aga."

"Whose signature, then?"

"The Kotwal Aga Hossein," replied the trembling Parsee.

"Thou art a fool as well as an idolator. Hossein was blown from the mouth of a gun at the Kotwally this morning," cried the havildar, rending the document to pieces.

"By whom?"

"Mahommed Bukht Khan, soubadar of the artillery," replied the other, laughing.

"And for what crime?"

"Crimes enough, I think; for concealing a white girl, and

secreting from Mirza Mogul a thousand gold mohurs,* which belonged to the Feringhee Judge Leslie."

"Oh, Fountain of Light, is it so?" groaned the Parsee, for the Kotwal was his friend and patron.

"Yes—so the Corporal, Assim Ali Khan, is Kotwal now."

"But my daughter must be borne to the appointed place—the Tower of Silence," urged Mohassan gently, as he became seriously alarmed for the safety of Kate, of himself, and his other friends.

"Not till we have seen what she was like," replied the havildar, who was evidently bent on mischief, and drunk with bhang; so he tore away the long white veil which covered the face of Kate, and a fierce and prolonged howl of astonishment rung from the sepoy guard, and the assembled lookers on, when they beheld a—white woman!

The six Parsees—so fair an excuse for oppressing and plundering them was not to be omitted—were instantly seized and made prisoners. The native Colonel rushed forward sword in hand to seize *his* captive; and on finding herself discovered at last, a prisoner, a victim, the prey of the cruel, rancorous, and unpitying horde of natives, Kate's blood seemed to congeal, to become actually frozen, and she neither uttered a cry, nor shed a tear, though grasped in the rude hands of Pershad Sing—the soubadar major of the 54th Infantry.

* A coin valued at thirty-two shillings sterling; but not in general use now.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

RETREAT TO MEERUT.

THE morning after that night of wandering and terror, spent by Kate in the streets of Delhi, and in the stately mosque of Shah Jehan, saw Rowley Mellon, with Frank Temple, Eversly, and some other fugitives, making their way along the Meerut Road, by Shahdorah, Tahurpoor, and other small villages, and so on, by Begumabad, in the vicinity of which there is an extensive serai.

There was a savage expression in our soldiers' eyes, and an emotion of aching despair in many of their hearts, for they had lost those they loved most on earth, and in modes so barbarous as to excite them to madness.

Mellon had been assured by some, that the gun-carriage, on which Kate was seated, had been driven to Metcalfe House; and he had followed the fugitives thither, effectively covering the rear with his own men and Harrower's mingled; but only to find no trace of Kate. To return was impossible. Then it was suggested that as some persons had crossed the river, she might have been conveyed away with them, so the heart-broken Mellon had no other course to pursue than to proceed towards Meerut with the surviving Europeans.

The slender party consisted now chiefly of Temple's men and his own, with a few civilians, who accompanied them on horseback, in buggies, or afoot; and all had strange and wild stories to tell of their adventures and escapes. One—a gentleman connected with the *Delhi Gazette*—had been pursued for miles, by a naick and four troopers of the 3rd Light Cavalry, having the while, his wife and their baby (which was fast asleep) beside him; but he gave her the reins, and with his double-barrelled rifle, in five successive shots, fired over the back of his buggy, knocked every sowar out of his saddle.

By night, all had trod on in silence, or uttering only from time to time, a fierce maledictiou or deep groan of grief. Breathless, and sorely athirst they were, after the excitement and toil of the past day, each poor fellow loaded with musket, bayonet, ammunition, canteen, and accoutrements; some of them carrying their own children, or those of their fallen or lost comrades, they struggled along manfully, and each seemed like Christian, floundering under his burden in the Slough of Despond.

But when day dawned and they looked into each other's sallow faces, a little conversation began.

"Did any one here see Ensign Rivers, of the 6th Native Infantry last night?" asked Mellon, whose face was deadly pale, his long, fair whiskers dark with grime, his eyes bloodshot, and his lips black, as if he suffered from fever.

"Rivers was on the leading gun-carriage, with one of the Leslie girls—Flora, I think," replied Temple, "but I am not quite certain."

"No one here seems certain of anything: and poor Polly Weston?"

"A lovely young girl!"

"She must have perished in the earlier part of that most horrible day!" groaned Mellon, his ideas connecting her with her cousin, the boy ensign.

"Awful work, this—by Jove!" exclaimed the dandy Eversly (whose uniform was all in rags) as he stumbled over a dead Englishman, one of the many, who when travelling dawk, were met and killed by the mutineers.

"By all that is holy, I hope we'll soon be back to Delhi—to-morrow, or the next day at latest—with the Queen's Dragoon Guards and the 60th Rifles, to kill every man and mother's son in the place!" said Doyle; "that once done, and all settled comfortable, I feel that I could depart in peace—by the trout of Kilgavower, I could!"

"Yes, Doyle, old boy!" exclaimed Temple, grasping his hand with a sternness of manner that well became the soldier-like young fellow; "we'll have a bloody reckoning for all that has happened. Let them come on a hundred to one, we shall meet them like Britons—won't we, lads?"

"That we shall, sir, foot to foot, bayonet to bayonet—think of the women—the girls—the women and the babies!" cried the men, in vengeful enthusiasm, to each other.

Doyle was smoking fiercely at a cheroot, the lighted end of which glowed like a carbuncle or a red fire-fly in the dusky dawn.

"By Gad!" said he, "when the 54th revolted, I wished that we had but one British regiment at our backs—only one, I don't care *which*—from the Scots Royals to the Canadian Rifles, to have cut the whole Sepoy Brigade to pieces! How small we felt, while quietly looking on that murdering scene by the Cashmere Gate; and how miserable, how degraded and broken in spirit I feel, to be levanting in this fashion from a rabble of Pandies!"

"They are not *all* a rabble, Mr. Doyle," said Colonel Rudkin in his quiet and unexcitable manner, "for the regularly drilled sepoys, under their soubadars and other native officers, were some

thousands strong—five full regiments certainly," he added, with his habitual smile.

"The merciless and cold-blooded hounds! oh, my poor Kate, and all her family, too—gone, gone, gone!" exclaimed Mellon; and he was not ashamed to weep before his men.

"Come, Rowley," said Doyle, "bear like a man."

"But I must also *feel* it as a man!" responded Mellon, unconsciously quotiug the very words of Shakespeare.

"Well, next week, Rowley, please God, we shall be bayoneting and blowing from the guns every copper-coloured beggar iu the place."

"Doyle, that will never restore the dead to life, or make the past return," said Mellon, with a sadness that was intense, while his men muttered much that was expressive of genuine ethnological contempt of the Hindostanees.

They knew not the actual state of their peril and isolation; they only thought and felt themselves to be a handful of fugitives from Delhi, who would soon return in strength, with others, to deal out a terrible meed of vengeance and retribution on the as yet victorious sepoys.

"In the Presidency of Bengal, at this moment," said Colonel Rudkin, to whose mind some such thoughts were occurring, "there are one hundred and fifty thousand troops; but of these, only two regiments of cavalry, sixteen of infantry, and six battalious of foot artillery, are Europeans, aud these are scattered, by corps and companies, over a territory exceeding by four times in size the whole of Great Britain; so if this rebellious fever spreads, we shall have some hard work to bleed it down."

"I think I could drink a whole pailful of iced sherbet, or of delicious brandy-paunee," said Eversly, with a sigh, as he thought of past luxuries.

"I should be thankful for one drop of cold water," responded Mellon, in a faint voice; "I feel as if a fever or a mortal illuess was about to seize me."

Eversly, long accustomed to every comfort at home and to every luxury in India, now felt the total deprivation of all which makes life endurable to the European there; now there was no tatty-wetter to sluice the verandah mattings, no punkah-wallah to clear the atmosphere of the night, no kitmutgar with his cup of sparkling hock, cold from the icepail, no mosquito curtains, and no chowrie wherewith to whisk those troublesome insects away. Yet he could see that misery of the heart is worse than that of the body, for after looking attentively at his brother officer, he said,—

"All this is deuced hard lines for you, Mellon; I have ouly two cigars left—have one?"

"True! in such a time as this he is to be thrice envied who has

neither wife nor child, kith nor kin, to lose—thanks for the cigar, Horace."

Many of the fugitives who had horses or buggies, and these were chiefly civilians, had now left the armed party far behind, pushing on for Meerut, a fatal measure for most of them, as it proved in the sequel.

The sun of the next day was hot and scorching; Mellon and others contrived to keep their heads tolerably cool, by simply tying a white handkerchief over the glazed top of the shako, and when they halted near a well, he strictly and wisely enjoined his men—many of whom were suffering from wounds and bruises—to allay their thirst by simply rinsing their mouths with the cool water, without swallowing it—a sore temptation to the poor fellows—as the danger of a copious draught, amid such heat and toil, was very great; and now the common safety and the great cause of humanity rendered it necessary that every European soldier should be in fighting order.

Wearily and heartlessly they trudged on their march; even Rudkin was afoot now, for a leech had gone up the nostril of his horse, as it drank at a wayside runnel, and he lost the animal as it plunged madly into the jungle.

They made a halt under the branches of a mango tope, near Morednuggur.

"Well may I say 'here will I lie to-night, but *where* to-morrow?'" sighed Mellon, in the bitterness of his heart, and he never could have conceived it possible that at that moment Kate—his own adorable Kate—was asleep, worn and exhausted, in the very bed he had so recently vacated, in the house of Mohassan Jamsetjee, the Parsee merchant!

Beyond Morednuggur, and more especially beyond Begumahad, they found on the road next morning the bodies of many Europeans murdered and stripped, and in these they recognised several of their fellow-travellers who had preceded them mounted or in vehicles, in their anxiety to get shelter and have their thirst allayed.

Ere long they saw the great and beautiful dome of the tomb of Abu rising from a square arcade of open arches, and encircled by eleven lesser domes, all shining in the sun before them; and when, after a thirty-four miles' march, they entered Meerut, on all sides were to be seen the handiwork of the 3rd Cavalry, the 11th, and 20th Infantry, ruined bungalows, and burned cantonments; but they learned from the 60th Rifles that the outrages on the highway had been perpetrated by a numerous gang of Pindaroons, armed ruffians, who served any leader without pay, and were then lurking in the adjacent forests.

Mellon had barely reported himself officially to the officer commanding in Meerut, when he expressed his burning desire and anxiety to return to Delhi, for which place he had hoped the

troops would at once set out; but he found with bitterness how little private interests and the most tender sympathies and affections will weigh with those who are compelled to manage with caution the sterner affairs of life.

To attack Delhi greater forces than those in Meerut were now required; the consultation of general officers had to be made, junctions with other troops effected, and a regular siege train prepared, so there were many days of torturing idleness, suspense, and delay, during which the bereaved Mellon, like many others in the same predicament, was nearly driven mad. Yet the duties of the station were numerous and heavy, for the whole country was excited and disaffected, or in open rebellion, and the savage gang of Pindaroons kept the garrison constantly on the alert.

At last Mellon, who longed for some more active employment or excitement than was afforded by mounting guard and picquet, volunteered to lead a party against those outlaws, and marched on his duty one evening with a mixed force, composed of forty of Harrower's men, under Temple, and as many of his own, the Bengal Fusileers.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MELLON AND THE PINDAROONS.

HAVING carefully reconnoitred the neighbourhood on the preceding day, he advanced in the direction of Sirdana, formerly the principality, or life fief, of Zebonissa, the Begum Sumroo, and to which her adopted son and heir, Mr. David Dyce Sombre, succeeded, with all the insignia of government, an arrangement, however, completely ignored by the East India Company, exactly as in the more recent case of Bajee Rao and the Nana Sahib, of Bithoor, adoption being permitted by the Hindoo laws.

"To dthraw the cover," as Doyle said, their party was preceded by a large bullock waggon, or curtained cart, such as the native women are wont to travel in from place to place. The curtains were tied close as if to seclude from all the coloured ladies, who

were represented by twelve men of the Cornish Light Infantry, with their Enfield rifles capped and loaded, and some fifty paces in the rear, marched Mellon with the rest of the detachment.

Lieutenant Frank Temple, tolerably well disguised, with a brace of loaded revolvers in his belt, acted as driver of this conveyance, and he vowed that the bullocks cost him more trouble than any four blood-horses that he had driven in the regimental drag along an English highway.

As the cart passed between the fields of wheat, sugar-cane, cotton, and maize that grew southward of Sirdana, which lies about ten cosses of Delhi (or sixteen miles English) distant from Meerut, an armed horseman was suddenly seen in front, but he galloped into the forest and disappeared.

"That fellow has gone, no doubt, to put the rascals on the alert," said Mellon, as they followed the very path he had taken.

Night had not yet closed in, so keeping the bullock waggon conspicuously halted on the highway, where it would be visible to any who might be secretly scouting on the verge of the forest, in a little clump of trees by the wayside, and within fifty yards of Temple's party, Mellon halted and concealed his men.

It was a very lonely place. Close by was a bamboo staff about twelve feet long; it was inserted in a pile of stones, with a little triangular flag fluttering, to indicate that there a man had recently been slain by a tiger. This caused an unpleasant association of ideas, for the spot seemed melancholy enough, and to add to the discomfort of it, in addition to odious monkeys leaping from branch to branch, and hogs grunting in an adjacent jungle, snakes were hissing about, and could be seen wriggling their way across the dusty road.

Here the company remained in silence for a time waiting for any sign of the Pindaroons, among whom were said to be many native police and sepoys; then the soldiers began to whisper one to another of the atrocities they had committed, chiefly on the Hindoo and little Christian community of Sirdana, tearing earrings out of the flesh, and hacking off hands and feet, to procure with greater ease the golden bangles of the women.

The first hour of night stole slowly on, and no sound came from the forest but the shrieking of the jackals, the croak of the cannibal birds, and the howl of a pariah dog. Some of these sounded very strange, and Mellon remarked to his companions that he strongly suspected that by imitating such cries the Pindaroons were collecting or signalling to each other.

The party remained seated by the verge of a cool *nuddee*, or rivulet, that crept through the thicket, and Frank Temple with his clumsy team out upon the highway became rather impatient, as the beams of the rising moon lighted up pretty plainly the

curtains of his bullock cart, making it a fair mark for any muskets or matchlocks in forest or jungle.

"Are you ill, Doyle, that you are so silent?" asked Mellon.

"No; but before marching I ate something—a chop it was—cooked by our bugler, Rowley, and, by St. Patrick, it would take the stomach of an ostrich or a cassowary to digest it," replied Doyle, who was smoking pensively, but with his keen eyes bent on the dark depths of the forest.

"Well, Pat—perhaps the bullets of the Pindaroons may be still less digestive."

"Bother the Pindaroons! I can't help thinking, Rowley, that you should have let the thieving devils alone; this expedition bates Banagher in folly!"

"Why?" asked Mellon, curtly; "or rather—how?"

"Because your life is wanted for better service at Delhi, and not to be thrown away here, doing the work of constables and chowkeydars."

"Wantonly I will not throw my life away," replied Mellon, whom recent events had considerably saddened in manner; "what said Plato?"

"By the powers, it's little I know what he said!"

"That a man is placed in his station in life, even as a soldier is on his post, which he is not to quit, whatever may happen, until summoned by the commander who placed him there."

"Rumour makes these Pindaroons five hundred strong," said Doyle, after a pause; "and we are only eighty rank and file, Mellon."

"Hush! if foreknowledge will lead me into peril—or what is worse, perhaps, into fear—I would rather go on in silence; so don't let the men hear you, Pat."

"Caution is not a peculiarity of my country," retorted the Irishman.

"I don't think you understand me," said Mellon, in a low voice.

"Faith! but it's a changed man you are, Rowley, and grown mighty sententious, too; but small blame to you, for that, after all you've undergone," said Doyle, and with something like a sigh, as he tossed away the end of his cigar; "poor Jack Harrower! It's sore my heart is when I see the uniform of his men, with their white facings, wings, and bugles, and think that he is not here among them. I wonder how Jack fared on that night of horror and sculduddery!"

Mellon bit his nether lip, and sighed bitterly. In his heart of hearts he shrunk from imagining how *another* might have fared, at the same time.

"With his Cornish manner, so blunt and so jolly, his clear eye, thick moustache, and close curly hair, somehow I always think I see Jack before me!"

"How—why, Doyle?"

"He was such a manly fellow, and there was so much—so much——"

"Individuality about him?" suggested Mellon.

"Yes, there was—that is the word, old fellow."

"Was, say you?"

"Exactly, Rowley."

"I hope to Heaven, Pat, your speaking in the *past* tense may prove a mistake in the end."

"So do I, with all my heart; but see—there is Frank Temple whipping up that mettlesome team of his. Oh, by the powers of Moll Kelly (whoever she was)! but the cover dthraws!"

"At fifty yards—ready!" cried Mellon, in a low, stern voice; and then every man grasped his rifle, and with his right fore-finger on the trigger, thought of that 11th of May in Delhi.

There was a sudden yell, which ascended through the dense interlacing branches of the forest into the clear sky of the Indian night, and a dark, supple, fierce, and brawny horde, inspired by the combined activity of the monkey and the tiger, clad, some in brilliant parti-coloured garments, but many of them bare-legged and bare-armed, with only red turbans and dirty cummerbunds, with swords, tulwars, and bayonets flashing in the moonlight, sprung up from the jungle-grass, dropped from the trees, or issued from the dingles of the old primeval forest, to surround, plunder, and capture the women, whom they confidently believed the bullock-waggon to contain, and the patient driver of which they supposed to have lost his way, else why would he have tarried there so long?

But great and sudden were their terror and bewilderment when their leader, a gigantic Mahratta, was shot dead, with three others, in less than three seconds, by Temple's revolver, while at the same moment the Enfield rifles flashed redly out, and with deadly effect, from under the curtains, killing many at second-hand—the conical rifle-bullets passing through two men in some instances, almost at the same time.

Before they could fire a shot—before they could strike a blow, or recover from their consternation, a volley was poured into them at fifty yards, almost point blank, by the main body of the detachment, under Mellon, who shouted,—

"Forward, men, with bayonet now! and remember Delhi—remember the women and children!"

The cheer that comes best, and only from our British soldier—no foreigner can attempt anything like it, except, perhaps, the Germans—rose to something like a fierce yell at these words, as his little band rushed on; and without one shout of defiance or stroke of resistance, the marauders fled, leaving more than seventy of their number dead or dying around the waggon—all ruffians of the deepest dye, reckless alike of life or death, of cruelty or crime!

In the agony of their wounds they gnashed their teeth, and strove to bite the feet and legs of the soldiers, or to make upward stabs and slashes at them with their knives and tulwars; but "Remember the women and babies!" was the *cri-de-guerre*, and the bayonet or the butt-end of the rifle soon quieted these obstreperous Pindaroons, and so closed the horrible scene.

Not a single European soldier was wounded—so successful, so complete had been the stratagem and surprise!

As all the Pindaroons were multifariously and elaborately armed, a great store of rare Indian weapons, such as matchlocks, poniards, and tulwars, many of them curiously inlaid, chased, or damascened, were gleaned up, and, together with many of the Company's muskets and bayonets, cast into the bullock-waggon.

In the shawl-girdles and wallets of the dead were found thousands of gold mohurs, rupees, nose-rings (evidently torn from the septum of the nose), amulets, anklets, bangles, and some relics of the Europeans slain at Meerut and on the roads leading thereto, such as seals, signet and wedding-rings, and among many other touching mementoes, such as hair-lockets, the coral rattle of a poor baby, with its silver bells encrusted with blood!

"Now, soldiers, this is our first act of retribution—our first instalment of vengeance!" said Mellon, with a grim smile, as he wiped the dew from the blade of his sword, and jerked it into the sheath.

"And not a man of us touched—by the trout of Kilgavower, but here's luck!" added Pat Doyle, as the bullocks were got in motion; and leaving the Pindaroons to the care of their compatriots or the jackals, the party formed fours, and retraced their steps to Meerut.*

* By a stratagem exactly similar, Lieutenant Cockburn, a Scottish officer of the Gwalior Contingent, with forty troopers, put five hundred mutineers to the rout, near Hattras, in the province of Agra.

CHAPTER XXXV.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

POLLY WESTON, after she was dragged into the palace-garden by Baboo Bulli Sing, remained for a time conscious only of the perilous state of her father, literally believing that she had been brought there to aid him, and quite oblivious of the growing hubbub in the city outside; for the poor girl failed to understand altogether what it was all about, or what object the hitherto quiet and orderly natives had in view.

The face of the unfortunate clergyman, his shirt-front and black clothes, were stained with the blood which flowed from the severe wound inflicted by the heavy lathee of the furious dervish. She wiped it away with her handkerchief; she tore the skirt of her dress to staunch the flow, the aspect of which filled her heart with agony.

He could not speak for a time, and she was thus long in discovering the exact nature of the outrage, and who committed it.

"Oh, papa! my own dearest papa!" she exclaimed, while placing his head on her bosom, and caressing it tenderly, "on my knees will I pray them to help you out of this place."

"Kneel not to them, but to Heaven; pray not to them—they are ignorant heathens—but to the Good Father of all," replied the Doctor, in very broken accents; "He before whom so many, all unprepared for the terrible change, shall be sent on this bloody day."

"Oh, papa! what do you mean? I do not comprehend. What is about to happen?"

"'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy.' Where are Lena and Kate?"

"At home, papa."

"And Mellon?"

"With his soldiers, or perhaps at home too."

"Alas! alas!" He clasped his hands.

"Home, where you must go with me now. Let me aid you to rise, papa—how feeble you are! Oh, make an effort!" she exclaimed, amid a flood of tears, while, with all her strength, she assisted her father to rise. "Our dear papa, whom Lena and Kate have tended and coddled so—what are you not suffering

now! But this wound," she added, with a sudden gust of anger, "who gave it—who dared to do it?"

"A native—a dervish, in whose hands I was left by our kitmutgar, the ungrateful Assim Alee."

"Ah! that we had big Jack Harrower here, he would soon see to it."

The gate by which they had both been thrust into the palace-garden had long since been secured and locked. On one side rose the embattled wall, thirty feet high, which encircles the whole palace and its precincts, guarded by seventeen great towers, and enclosing a space of buildings and gardens a mile in length by more than a quarter of a mile broad, including the Selinghur Fort on the north.

On the south side towered up the wonderful façade of the palace, its pillared arcades of open arches surmounted by gorgeous and projecting cornices, by glittering minarets and swelling domes of polished copper or gilded plates; its walls and peristyles of white marble, the carvings and capitals being of black marble or red stone, and its many gigantic windows hung with blinds and drapery of brilliant green or scarlet, fringed and tasselled with silver or gold. Heavy cannon were mounted at all the gates, but the greatest were at the old entrance, where, according to Bernier, there stood two gigantic elephants of stone, the first bearing an effigy of Jamiel the famous Rajah of Chittore, and the second that of his brother.

Between the gorgeous palace and the little wicket—against which Polly beat with her hands—spread, in all its oriental loveliness, the garden formed by Shah Jehan, but which must not be confounded with that of Shah-al-Imar, which cost a million sterling, and is the same garden so celebrated by Moore in his "Lalla Rookh."

"Come, papa, they must open this gate," said Polly, adjusting her white crape bonnet and her somewhat disordered dress; "they have no business to put us in here—those very impertinent people."

"Do you not know where we are, Polly?"

"In the King's garden, it would seem; a strange place, where Europeans are never admitted—at least so Captain Douglas says, and he ought to know."

"My poor child!" moaned the Doctor, in great sickness of heart.

"Here comes that most absurd person again."

"Who, Polly?"

"The soubadar, Baboo Bulli Sing, whom we always laugh at on the course."

"He comes for no good purpose, Polly, love."

"I shall talk to him about that wicked wretch of a dervish, who dared to misuse you so; and as to Assim Alee, the kitmutgar, he

shall be sent to the police-office, handed over to the Kotwal, and imprisoned."

Baboo heard her concluding remark, and he grinned as he approached.

He was gorgeously attired in very bright colours, with a diamond aigrette and bird of paradise plume in his green turban; and he was armed with a sabre, pistols, and poniard, all glittering with precious stones. Four of the King's matchlock men, clad also in eastern costume, followed him. His dusky visage was flushed almost red, and his dark eyes were sparkling with triumph and excitement; yet he spread over his exterior that singular calmness which can be assumed by all Mohammedans when they choose.

"Aga Sahib," said the Doctor, making a great effort to speak, for he knew but too well what the rising tumult in the city meant, "set free my child, and take my life, if you seek it; I am old, so what matter is it whether I die now or ten years hence; but set *her* free, I say, and willingly shall I bare my neck to the sword."

"Papa, papa," exclaimed Polly, in great bewilderment, "why talk so strangely?"

"Your daughter shall remain," replied Baboo, in Hindostanee; "as yet your mischievous life is not wanted, old Sower of Heresy, though the time may come when, had you a thousand lives, the sword of justice should take them all."

The shouts and screams, with the frequent explosions of musketry without, continued to increase, and several unhappy Europeans, covered with dust and blood, their clothes disordered and torn—people who in their despair, had somehow forced a passage into the royal gardens—were now seen rushing towards the palace as a bourne of safety, for none as yet knew the treachery and complicity of the Mogul dynasty. Armed men followed, shooting and sabreing them in all directions; others they seized, stripped to the skin, and bound cruelly and tightly to the trunks of the date-palms and other trees, to await the orders of the old king, Mohammed Bahadoor, or his sons.

Polly, unable to look upon those dreadful scenes, hid her pale face in her father's breast, and thus they partly supported each other, standing under the fierce tropical sun, while Baboo and his escort looked frigidly on.

Among those slayers, now bristling with arms and spotted with blood, the Doctor recognised Assim Alee, his own kitmutgar, who came forward with a furious and insolent expression, brandishing the sword of Captain Douglas, which, but for the presence of Baboo, who had evidently received some special order concerning the Doctor, he would have used to some fatal purpose.

On beholding this ungrateful domestic, whom he had ever treated with kindness since they had landed together at Calcutta,

and whom he had brought back from London, in the streets of which he had picked him up, when in a state of utter misery, selling religious tracts, patent vestas, and jabbering a song to the monotonous sound of a tom-tom :—

"Man!" the Doctor exclaimed, "if you are indeed a man, Assim Alee, answer me, does your prophet Mohammed sanction the slaughter of poor helpless women and little children, and the committal of cruelties such as these?"

"Yes—so the holy Imams and the dervishes tell us—we may slay all who are unbelievers."

"Does not the prophet say that such deeds will be punished in this world and in that which is to come?"

"I know not, sahib—does the Koran say so?" asked the valet, a little abashed, apparently.

"Yes, in many places; I have studied it as well as the Bible of the Christians."

"Then you who know the Koran, ought to follow its precepts, and cast your Bible into the flames. By the holy Kaaba, how glibly this Feringhee fakir talks of the prophet!"

"Behold my daughter, Assim Alee, she is sinking with fear and exhaustion—have you no gratitude for past kindness—no truth to the bread and salt you have eaten under my roof for five years—no compunction?"

"None!" was the cool reply, as the ex-valet leaned on the sword with which he had provided himself, and thrust his turban close down on his black eyebrows.

"Do we deserve this return at your hands?"

"To die is your destiny and hers—to destroy you all is ours. It was ordained so, when God fixed the stars in Heaven, and how can we set aside that which was appointed to be?"

"All this is fanaticism, or madness, and raving, Assim," said the Doctor, anxiously and earnestly; he felt all the peril of his daughter's situation. Thought for himself, the single-hearted old man had none.

"It is neither raving nor madness; we obey God as the Hindoos obey Seva, and slay when the omens are favourable. You are all at our mercy, accursed Feringhee, so now the time of death has arrived!"

Polly, who had scarcely understood all this, as it passed in Hindostanee, now uttered a shriek, for the valet—who had worked himself into a pitch of frenzy—raised the sword, but Baboo Sing interposed his Damascus sabre, saying sternly—

"Enough of this, Weston sahib and his daughter are prisoners of the King, and to-morrow shall be brought before him in the Dewan Khana."

"Thanks, soubadar," said Dr. Weston, with an air of intense relief and satisfaction; "we are saved, Polly, for the King of Delhi is a loyal subject of Queen Victoria, and will protect us."

"But Lena and Kate, papa?"

"Ah, Lena and Kate—Lena and Kate!" said he, and then he wrung his hands with sudden anguish; "they are in the city—God help them!"

Faint with loss of blood, Dr. Weston now reeled, and nearly fell; but Polly embraced and supported him with all her strength.

"My papa looks as if he was dying; oh, Assim Alee," she exclaimed in a piercing voice, "if you ever loved him, help me—he has ever been so kind, so good to you."

"Missee Polle, he not dying—but he die soon," replied the valet in his broken English, "sartin and sure, if you prove obstinate——"

"How—to whom?"

"Mirza Abubeker," said the valet, with a grin.

"Chup-chup!" (silence) said Baboo, striking Assim with the flat side of his sabre; "begone to the city—there's work for you there. Take the white sahib to the Tower of the Sally-port," he added to two of his matchlock men, "and keep him there till further orders. To the palace with the girl," said he to the others: "she must be brought before Mirza Abubeker to-morrow, as we all value our heads."

Father and daughter were now torn apart. Filled with despair and grief, Dr. Weston strove to break away from the two brawny matchlock men, but in vain; he could but throw his hands and eyes in deep entreaty upward, while a cold perspiration burst over him.

"Oh, Father, who art in Heaven, save my poor children—my pure and spotless lambs—from those ravening wolves, those pitiless heathens! Save those who cannot save themselves!"

Polly, poor child—she was only in her sixteenth year—raised two fairy-like hands, so tiny, white, and delicate they were, in supplication for her old father, and for him only. Guiltless, spotless, and sinless, the pale English girl was without fear for herself, but her bosom heaved painfully, respiration became difficult; her lips were parted, her eyes pleaded, but her voice was gone.

They were separated, with arms outstretched, and streaming eyes turned towards each other. If Dr. Weston had a favourite among his children, or could choose between them, the odds were perhaps for this golden-haired Hebe, for Polly his youngest born, and at that moment the keen iron entered his soul.

Will they ever meet again, those hearts so tender and so loving—so wrung with anguish and terror? We shall see.

She was conveyed into the palace, while her father was roughly dragged round the ramparts that guard the river front, and thrust into a strong chamber near the sally-port, which opens in the centre of that long extent of wall, and exactly midway between the Shah Boorj and the Raj Ghat Gate, facing a sandy isle of the

Jumna, about a mile-and-a-half long, and the bank where elephants were fought, and warlike sports went on of old.

Left there to his own reflections, their tenor may be imagined. Two of his daughters were, he knew, in the city, and the third was in the palace of the Moguls, a prisoner—a foredoomed victim!

* * * * *

Better that all three should be in their graves. He thought of their mother, and strove to calm himself and pray, and to address himself in fitting terms to that Divine Master whom he had served with all his heart and soul for so many years in earnestness and humility; but delirium sometimes seized him, and he beat his breast and temples as the voice, the presence, and maternal love of his dead wife came back to memory.

All that day and part of the next, the reports of cannon and musketry, with occasional shrieks and outcries, rang round the walls of the palace, which were shaken to their very foundation by the terrible explosion of the arsenal.

Though Dr. Weston, stretched on a humble charpoy, or native bed, imagined the most dreadful things, conjuring up images that froze his blood, Lena was with Jack Harrower, Kate for the time was only half-a-mile distant in the house in Chandney Choke, and Polly was simply kept an unmolested prisoner in an apartment of the zenana, carefully watched by an ayah, lest she might harm herself by springing over a window, or so forth.

Her admirer, Mirza Abubeker, had no time to see her then; the Meerut mutineers and others were pouring into the city, and his royal hands were quite full of serious employment.

So, when day began to dawn once more upon the city and plains of Delhi, both father and daughter found that they had actually survived the night, but had before them a hopeless day, of which they could not foresee the close.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MIRZA ABUBEKER.

WE have much to relate of undeserved sorrow and unexampled suffering—of religious fanaticism and Oriental cruelty, incident to that terrible time, when we, who had conquered alike the Rajpoot, the Sikh, the Ghoorka, and Mahratta, were fugitives or victims; when the tales of slaughter made every heart in Britain throb; when our gentle and delicate English ladies actually learned to load and discharge the Enfield rifle; when peaceful civilians slept with revolvers under their pillows, and loaded muskets by their side, and when poor little children in their innocence, with their golden hair and their bright English faces, clapped their plump little hands to the exploding bomb, or with childish fearlessness ran after the black cannon shot, as after a toy, while it ricochetted through the fatal entrenchment at Cawnpore, and when mothers watched and wept, and fathers and comrades awaited Sir James Outram's orders, during the long—long dreary nights in the Alumbagh.

Early next morning the ayah who had charge of Polly Weston—disturbing the almost childlike prayer offered up on her knees to her Father in heaven, that "He would watch over her dear papa, Lena, and Kate, and all their friends, and would love and guard herself;" the ayah, we say, a dingy little copper-coloured woman, clad almost entirely in scarlet, was ordered by the sable official in charge of the zenana, to deliver her over to Baboo Sing; and so she came forth with faltering footsteps, pale as marble, after a day of terror and grief, followed by a night of sleeplessness and the keenest anxiety. She had dark circles round her eyes, and an almost haggard expression of fear.

Was this the Polly who seemed born only to laugh, to flirt so artlessly, and be always happy?

Now she was suddenly precipitated into all the horrors and barbarism, for such they were (with all the splendour and luxury of India), of manners and ideas which have been unchanged since England was a Saxon heptarchy, or a Danish conquest, and which had existed for centuries before.

On seeing Baboo Sing and a matchlock man, she shrunk back with such undisguised fear and loathing, that she nearly sank at his feet; but the dusky soubadar, after a day of unrestrained

rapine in the streets, and a night of revelling and debauchery in the palace, was in no mood to be treated thus, so a sudden gust of rage seized him. A dangerous red gleam passed over his glossy black eyes, and his lips became pale and fierce.

As she was about to elude his hand, he grasped her rudely by the shoulder, tearing all her muslin dress, and rending her bodice, and then the lovely English girl stood palpitating before them in all the ivory whiteness of her skin, bare almost to the slender waist, her glorious golden hair rolling in masses over her shoulders and delicate bosom, her blue eyes full of anguish and utter dismay, the parted lips showing her close, small teeth, and her lovely hands, the while, were crossed on her breast in prayer and entreaty; but in her stature, mere girl though she was, and in her bulk she contrasted most favourably with the dark and diminutive Hindoo maids, who, in their sixteenth year, are both lean and *passée;* and so thought Baboo Bulli Sing, who was somewhat of a connoisseur.

He surveyed her with a strange expression of mingled covetousness, cruelty, and admiration.

"By the soul of Mohammed!" he was thinking, "to see this white-skinned Feringhee girl, with her thick golden hair falling over her shoulders thus, and almost veiling her face and her blue eyes too, gives one very odd thoughts. Why should I not keep her to myself? But she is known to be here, and must be produced with the rest!"

Was she so utterly friendless or abandoned by Fate, as to be quite at the mercy of this man, Baboo Sing, at whom she and her companions had so often laughed, and were wont to characterize as a "perfect toad," when they rode or drove past him on the course?

Her natural indignation was coming to her aid again, when the noise of approaching shouts below the palace wall caused Baboo to look over the parapet, and seizing her by the wrist, he dragged her forward and exclaimed—

"Look! see what awaits you, Missee Baba, if you fail to obey us, and more than all to find favour with Mirza Abubeker!"

The morning sun, in all his glory, was streaming down the long and magnificent vista of Chandney Choke—the street of silver—the entire length of which is visible, due westward from the palace to where it terminates at the Lahore Gate; and along this street a wild rabble was now advancing.

Polly turned her sad eyes instinctively to a well-known house, with green blinds and double verandahs, which stood nearly opposite the kotwally (or mayoralty) and its adjoining mosque, a little place, where Nadir Shah, the great Persian sovereign and victor, sat during the massacre in 1737, quietly, securely, and in solitude, while fifty thousand persons perished by the swords of his followers, in the streets of Delhi. It was the house where

Rowley Mellon had lodged with the Parsee Mohassan Jamsetjee; but little could Polly imagine, that at that moment her dear sister Kate was then safe in Rowley's old couch, in a species of stupor, conduced by grief and exhaustion, rather than sleep.

A dreadful yell now passed along the street below, and with it came the sound of wheels, and the rush of thousands of bare or slippered feet. Surrounded by this shrieking horde in turbans and cummerbunds of all colours, bare-legged and bare-armed, or in tattered sepoy uniforms, were two English ladies, stripped perfectly nude, and bound by their tender limbs with ropes to two nine-pounder gun-carriages, on which, with their dishevelled hair sweeping the streets, they were drawn away towards the market-place, amid the jeers and mockery of the lowest ruffians in Delhi, escaped convicts, budmashes, coolies, and kindalahs, who are Hindoo vagabonds of a caste so low that it was once lawful for others to put them to death, if they approached too near, for they were deemed as the Cagots of India.

As this appalling cavalcade swept past with a roar that shook the palace walls, Polly nearly fainted.

"Hah!" said Baboo, with a fierce grin, "one of those Feringhees is a niece of the agah Sahib (the great Law-judge) Leslie."

One of the gay, the beautiful, and the wealthy Leslies? Oh, what a change was here? Who might the other victim be? But she dared not ask herself; and now, from time to time, a wilder yell rose up from the distant market-place.

Ere nightfall the poor remains of the two ladies were unbound from the carriages by coolies, and thrown to the jackals and pariah dogs, outside the Wellesley bastion.

After this terrible scene Polly made no further resistance; she acted simply like an automaton, and, ere long, she found herself in the Dewan Khana.

Through the lofty windows of that white marble hall, the sun of the Indian morning was pouring a flood of splendour on the painted pillars, the golden cornices, arches, arabesques, and the glories of the throne, the jewels of which seemed a mass of prisms; but the same light fell upon a crowd of helpless and hapless beings—European and Eurasian women and girls, many of whom were disfigured with blood and bruises, and all of whom had their dresses torn, and their hair in disorder, for all had lost or been deprived of their bonnets.

They were hemmed together at the lower end of this great audience-hall, under a guard of sepoys and matchlock men. "To such a plight," says an eloquent writer, "had come the bloom which once, fresh from the breezes of home, had charmed and puzzled Calcutta, and the toilettes, whose importation and inspection supplied matter for months' conjecture and a week's happy occupation. Where were now the tact, the cultivation,

and all the indefinable graces of refined womanhood? Simplicity and affectation, amiability and pride, coquetry and reserve, discretion and sweet susceptibility were here all confounded in a dull uniformity of woe."

Baboo Sing, and a tall man in silver grey uniform, with a horrible face, having only two wide red nostrils for a nose, Shumshoodeen Khan the Rissaldar, were eyeing this herd of poor girls as wolves might eye a flock of frightened lambs; but now they were all thrust forth from the hall, and, poor creatures, their fates were sealed soon after!

The last who left the royal presence with those unfortunate beings, were the Fakir Gunga Rai, with his mouth full of betel-leaf, and the two valets, Assim Alee and Ferukh Pandy. The latter was armed with Jack Harrower's double barrelled rifle, and wore a suit of his master's ample undress uniform, which, on his lean little figure, would have been, at any other time, intensely absurd.

"Oh, Cousin Polly—dear, kind, Cousin Polly," cried a pleading little voice, as the captives were driven forth, and starting as if she had received a galvanic shock, Polly would have rushed after the crowd, for the speaker was little Willie, who had been gleaned up among others near the Cashmere Gate; "take me home—take me home to Cousin Lena—I am so frightened and so hungry!"

"Oh, my love, my angel, Willie!" cried Polly, in greater agony of soul than ever, to hear a voice as it were from home; but she could see nothing of the child, who was a lovable little pet of six years, with blue eyes, cheeks like winter apples, and curly hair as golden as her own.

She was now brought forward before the gilded chair, in which, with his legs folded under him, like a regal tailor, on cushions of crimson satin and cloth of gold, sat Mirza Abubeker, who, from under the circle of an immense turban, was eyeing her with as much complacency and pleasure as it was possible for his *blasé* nature to feel; while at the verge of the royal carpet Baboo Bulli Sing salaamed for a dozen of times, on each occasion making his head almost touch the ground.

The prince was an effete, soft, sleepy, and sensual-looking man, with small cunning eyes, and thick, full, red lips; and there was an over-fed and greasy aspect about his yellow skin that made Polly shudder. As he relinquished to an attendant the curling snakes of a magnificent hookah, the bowl of which stood at some distance off, she had only a confused idea of a man regarding her with keen, black, twinkling eyes; that his dress seemed a strange arrangement of the richest shawls and masses of jewels, for the smallest sapphire that sparkled in his turban, on his brown fingers, or the hilt of his poniard, might have made a London beauty happy, or a burglar independent.

In letters of gold, on the white cornice above the throne, were those words which the Shah Allum ordered to be placed there, and they were a mockery of the misery of which that place was too often the scene.

"If there be a Paradise upon earth,
It is here—it is here—it is here!"

Mirza Abubeker was alone in the Dewan Khana on this stirring morning. The senile, but withal cruel old king, had not yet emerged from his zenana, and Mogul had already assumed his place as commander-in-chief of the revolted sepoys, and was laboriously endeavouring to act his part as such among them.

"She is fit for Paradise!" exclaimed Abubeker, in Hindostanee, on finding the result of his inspection satisfactory; then he added in tolerably good English, "do not be alarmed, Missee Weston; you shall not be injured—no, not even to one hair of your head. You must surely remember me, and know me well?"

"My lord," said she, suddenly gathering courage from despair, and something also from his speech; "you know my dear papa—you were kind to my sisters and to me—once—once——," sobs choked her utterance, "you sent us all presents of Champac ornaments and Cashmere shawls—you may remember, my lord——"

"O yes—perfectly."

"You did us that honour——"

"I mean to do you a still greater," said Abubeker, as his face suddenly lighted up, and the girl shuddered again, as his meaning began to dawn upon her, for his black eyes, usually so sleepy in expression, now looked straight into hers, and terrified her trembling heart.

"Oh my lord," said she, folding her hands, "have pity upon me—upon us all!"

"The voice of the little Feringhee maiden is so sweet, that it would charm even the snakes in the jungle," said the prince to his henchman.

"I would speak of my father, of my dear papa, who was cruelly treated yesterday by one of your people. You know English well, my lord," she added, throwing herself upon her knees, and heedless of the eyes of the matchlock guard which stood beside the royal chair; "if he—he—if he is yet in life," she sobbed, lifting up her hands and eyes in the most touching manner, "spare him, and let me see him—and we shall never cease to pray for and to bless you."

"The prayers of infidels are but as curses. But to see him?"

"Yes, my lord—oh, take me to him!"

"That is impossible now."

"Why—he is dead! he is dead!" she cried, wildly.

"He is not—I swear it by the head of my father, the King! but it is simply this, that no other man's eye than mine—not even his—shall see you after to-day, Miss Weston!"

"Spare him, and set him free!" implored the girl, in desperation and reckless misery.

"He shall be spared—*if possible*," he added, in Hindostanee.

"Have you no fear, my lord, for all this terrible work—all those crimes? You must know that a dreadful punishment awaits you, and all your people!"

"The little Feringhee actually beards us under the shadow of the peacock throne!" said Abubeker, laughing; "but you know not of what you talk," he added, with complacency and perfect gentleness. "The Sultan of Roum, and the King and Lord of Egypt, will allow no more of your people to come hither, even if Brigadier Napoleon aided them, for they shall all perish under cannon-shot in the Red Sea, as you name the ocean of Kolzom."

"Oh! no, Prince—be wary and merciful in time—you cannot stand against our power with success in the end."

"You are bold for a Feringhee, Missee Pollee," said the prince, still good-humouredly! "by the way, that is an absurd name, and we must have it changed, Baboo."

"If she will allow us, most high," replied Baboo Sing, in their own guttural language.

"Whether she wills it or not."

"Then what shall it be?"

"Amena—no; she was the mother of the prophet: Fatema; she was his daughter, and one of the four perfect women. To name an infidel so were a blasphemy. Let it be Nour-mahal—(light of the zenana)—already has the Queen of Delhi been so named; but she was one of the Faithful—not a white slave girl like this."

"Good, most high."

"Then Nour-mahal be it—tell the chief ayah."

"She is beautiful as the rose of a hundred leaves!"

"Have her placed in that corner of the zenana which adjoins the Water-gate."

"It is the least comfortable, most high."

"How?"

"For there the water from Shah Boorj flows close to the wall."

"That matters not—it is the most secluded; and on your lives see that none approach her," replied Abubeker, who could not forget that he had a troublesome and jealous wife, who, though one of four, was capable of committing any enormity on a mere slave girl; "you shall be most safely cared for, Missee Weston," said he, salaaming with both hands; "and when you are more composed, I shall have the pleasure of visiting you in person; till then it is useless to speak to you."

"My poor papa——" she began to urge.

"Is safe, as yet—of that be assured."

"But where, my lord."

"Within these walls."

"Safe!—oh! thanks—thanks! and you will——"

"By my soul, and the shirt of the Prophet! this wearies me—take her away, and instantly," said Abubeker, with sudden irritation; and in the hands of an ayah, and two men, dark as negroes, but clad in spotless white turbans and dresses, Polly Weston was led away she knew not whither, for the whole palace seemed to be whirling round her, and by noon she was in a raging fever.

It was not often that Abubeker swore by anything so sacred as the shirt of the prophet, which is a famous relic, or rather a rag, preserved at Candahar, where it was once worshipped by Shah Soojah, escorted by a British guard of honour, to the great scandal of the evangelisers; but now the soubadar of the palace matchlock men could not repress his astonishment at the confident bearing of the captive girl.

"What!" he exclaimed, "a wretched little Feringhee girl, while we are cutting her people into kabobs, dare to flout one of the Moguls—a Prince of Delhi, for whom alone the sun rises and sets? A son of Mahommed Bahadoor Shah, who, if he were to say at midnight, 'it is noon,' the moon and stars would disappear, and the sun shine out."

Compliments quite as sapient as these were once spoken in the gardens and ante-chambers of Versailles, in the days of the Grand Monarque, and his successor.

"She is likely to prove dreadfully obstinate," said the prince, as Baboo assisted him to rise from that luxurious chair, which had four rests, on swivels, for the elbows and knees; "and there is another misfortune—I fear she is about to have a serious illness, and we do not understand the ways of these Feringhees."

"A hakim might see her."

"Not after she has seen *me*," replied the prince; "then I fear the fiery jealousy of Azeezun."

The lady herein referred to was the prince's chief wife, and instigator of many cruelties, as we afterwards learned, when the whole family, in the following January, were tried by a General Court Martial for treason and murder.

"I would blow the old Feringhee moolah, her father, from a mortar, and before her very eyes!" said the soubadar, indignantly.

"Why?"

"As a lesson of obedience to this Missee Pollee."

"You would achieve little by that," replied the prince, buckling on a magnificent sabre, which once belonged to old Runjeet Sing, the King of Lahore.

"How then, most high, are you to stoop and sue to a Feringhee girl?"

"I scarcely know."

"May I, Mirza, in all humility, presume to suggest?"

"Suggest then, at once," said Abubeker, with a dark look, for, like some lazy natures, he could be irritable enough at times, if thwarted.

"Detain the padre Weston in prison near the Sally-port, and keep *his* life or death even as a sword hanging over her head, and to save him she will yield in the end."

The prince laughed approvingly.

"So be it; by the black stone of the Kaaba, it is not a bad idea! and now for my horse—I have to see Shumshoodeen Khan and the sowars of our faithful 3rd Light Cavalry, on parade near the garden of Shah-al-imar, so let us begone."

The prince was impatient to begin his new duties as General of his father's cavalry; but the cruel advice of Baboo Sing was taken, and for a time the life of the unhappy Dr. Weston was only spared for a purpose of which he knew very little.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

IN THE GROVE OF THE THREE TEMPLES.

WHILE thus Dr. Weston and his two daughters, and even the orphan child, little Willie, all severed and apart, remained helpless prisoners in the city of Delhi, Jack Harrower, leading by the bridle the artillery horse on which he had mounted Lena, set out due north in hopes to strike upon the Meerut road, which, in the confusion of the time and hurry of the whole episode, he had contrived to miss; thus, he could find no means of crossing the Doab Canal and getting to the east side of the water, the revolters, for the express purpose of mischief, or to prevent fugitives from getting away, having broken down and destroyed two of the bridges.

"Oh, for a thousand—ay, even five hundred of the men of Inkermann or Balaclava!" exclaimed Harrower, as he looked back to the beautiful city, above the embattled walls of which the red and wavering flames were rising in twenty places.

Yes; or had he but one half of his own gallant regiment, or of those who, under Neil and Nicholson, Campbell and Havelock, afterwards marched to vengeance and retribution, he might have made the remainder of that night a dear one to the Pandies and the dynasty of the Moguls; but he was a fugitive now, and for the present such wishes were futile.

If his thoughts were fiery and fierce, Lena's were all softness and sorrow.

"Ah, Harrower," said she, "how difficult it is to think of the scenes of horror, the blood, and desolation we have witnessed, and yet believe this to be a part of 'that world which God made and said it was good.'"

"'God made the country,' Lena, but the Pandies made the town," replied Harrower, grimly, as he thought of his slaughtered friends and of his men. Who among them had escaped, and who perished? Time alone could tell.

He knew not in that time of doubt and flight, that little more than a quarter of a mile distant from where he and Lena were proceeding in anxiety and dread, the remnant of his once fine company under Frank Temple, of Mellon's party of the Bengal Fusiliers,* with Rudkin and other fugitives from the house of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, were making the best of their way to Meerut, gallant Pat Morris Doyle, like several others, carrying a child which he had picked up in the scramble, but belonging he knew not to whom, nor did he care, so that "the life of the little spalpeen was saved."

Harrower and Lena proceeded in a silence broken only by a strange interjection occasionally from him and a sob from her, as if her swollen heart was bursting.

"Oh, that I had some right to caress and console her—to kiss those hot salt tears away!" whispered Jack to himself.

She thought only of her lost or scattered family, scattered never to

* For the information of the non-military reader, it may be mentioned that the corps thus referred to were not natives, but men of the 1st and 2nd Bengal Fusiliers, always composed of Britons born, and now placed on the British establishment as the 101st and 104th Regiments of the Line. The first was the oldest battalion in the service of the Honourable East India Company, and long bore the name of *Clarke-Ka-Ghora-logue*, having been raised by a Captain Clarke, and it has served in all the great battles of India, from Plassy to the capture of Delhi and Lucknow in the year of the mutiny. The 2nd Regiment of Bengal Fusiliers was embodied in 1839.

Pultan-Ka-Ghora-logue means literally, "a Battalion of White People."

be united again, even in the grave, perhaps; but though he mourned them sincerely, his chief anxiety was the protection of her, and her conveyance to a place of safety. There were the dews of night to be dreaded, with their consequent fevers and agues; there were also the wild animals with which the woods and dense jungle abounded, and to scare which he dared not light a fire: boars, bears, wolves, tigers, and panthers, and more than all these, there were the fanatical natives of all castes and communities.

Thus, every casual sound made him start, to pause, reconnoitre, and listen, pistol in hand, and his heart really leapt, when now and then a shrill halloo came from a vast distance on the clear night air.

To Jack there was one good grain of comfort in all this predicament; Fate had cast Lena into *his* care or keeping, and *not* that of Mark Rudkin; and in this single instance, at least, his star was in the ascendant.

"Endeavour to control your excessive grief, dear Lena," said he, holding the horse by one hand, and placing the other caressingly on her arm; "hope that all, at least, are not quite lost, and that you may soon see them again, for we know not what a day may bring forth. I am, I know, a blunt fellow, and not very capable of consoling the afflicted; but it seems to me, somehow, as if your folks were so good and amiable, that Heaven will watch over them, so hope for the best until we learn the worst."

"True, Jack, true; but how can I have hope in my own heart when, in spite of all you urge, I fear it has long since died out of yours? But I shall endeavour to restrain my tears—they worry you, perhaps, and lest they exhaust me, for I know that we may have much to undergo together."

Even in that hour of trouble the "we" sounded pleasantly in Jack's ear. Lena Weston's voice was so alluring that she might have won even a blind man to love her; and, alone as they were together now, in that wild place, each time she spoke Jack felt like Claude Melnotte, "the old time come o'er him."

"Experience and peril have taught me, Lena," said he, "that self-control is the most useful of all powers."

"Because it leads to the control of others."

"Exactly; and hence it is a power well worth attaining."

"You are a strong man, Jack; I only a feeble woman, broken in heart, crushed in spirit, and, I fear, a sore incumbrance to you."

"Lena, now *you* are not saying what you think; but I would to Heaven I knew where we are," said Harrower, to change the subject.

"We have missed the Meerut road, certainly, long ago; I have driven that way often with papa—dearest papa—and know it well."

"We have missed the Doab Canal, too; those halloos which we heard made me diverge through the cotton fields to the left, so now we can but seek some place in which you can pass the night, and where I shall keep guard till day breaks, and then we may look about us."

A thin gauzy cloud which had partially obscured the moon, now passed away; her light streamed out in all its brilliance, and they discovered at the end of the narrow footway they had been pursuing, between a field of cotton and one of maize, a dense tope or grove of trees, into which, finding all still and quiet, they ventured to penetrate.

In the centre of the grove was a cleared space of considerable extent, upon which the moon shone clearly. The trees were all of remarkable beauty, for they were the tamarind, the mango, the cassia, and, high over all, the fanlike foliage of the drooping palm; and, amid the shadows of all, the red fireflies were flashing to and fro.

In the centre was an alligator tank of great size, built entirely of white marble, in the clear shining water of which floated great numbers of the beautiful scarlet lotus, having flowers much larger than those of the water-lily; and on three sides of this tank were three beautiful little Hindoo temples, all exactly alike, their walls and domes being of snow-white marble, with flights of steps ascending to the pointed doorways, the carvings of which were as curiously and marvellously executed as those of Chinese ivory work. Each temple was lighted by three coloured lamps, and thus a flake of parti-coloured light streamed through each open doorway on the water of the tank, where they melted away in the moonshine.

These three temples were, of course, dedicated to the Creator, the Producer, and the Destroyer, the triple godhead of Hindoo mythology. There, then, in that solitary place, where only the devout would come to pray, in something of the same desperate hope that much about the same time animated Kate Weston, when she sought a temporary sanctuary in the great mosque of Shah Jehan—Harrower resolved to bivouac for the remainder of the night.

He selected a place where the foliage was thickest, and there he unbitted and tethered the horse; he eased the girths, and at the risk of being seen in the bright moonlight, he brought it water in his shako from the tank, for he looked to this animal as being his chief means of saving Lena, though she had to ride most unconfortably, by sitting on one side of a high-peaked military saddle.

When Jack dipped his cap in the tank, a shudder of repugnance escaped him, for a number of alligators—fed up and fattened reptiles—which had been lying in the water especially in the slimier portions thereof, motionless as trunks of trees, and looking

not unlike them too, got suddenly into motion, rolliug and surging about, with their little eyes glittering, and their tongueless jaws gaping wide.

"Disgusting monsters!" was the mode in which Jack apostrophised the animals sacred to these Hindoo shrines; "had I toppled in, by Jove! they'd have gobbled me up like a shrimp!"

Some of them were fully twenty feet long.

With the large cloak, which he had so thoughtfully brought from the guu-carriage, he made a species of couch for Lena Weston, in a place where the grass was dry and soft, and placing his flask for a moment to her lips, he covered her up, carefully and tenderly, from the dew which was falling uow.

"Sleep if you can, Lena, dear," said he, "and I will watch you with a care that shall be untiring—so fear not."

"Dear Jack, give me your hand," said she in a trembling voice.

Kneeling, he placed a hand in hers.

"No, no! you must not do that," he exclaimed, as she pressed it to her lips, and he felt her tears falling hotly on it.

"Jack, you are the only friend I have left me in the world now,—and I—I know, am not worthy of all your kinduess and devotion."

"Sleep, Lena, sleep," said he in a troubled voice, as he kissed both her hands, again spread the cloak carefully over her, and, with his pistols, sat down by the root of a mango tree, to wait, to watch, and to think.

For a time he heard only her sobs painfully at every second or third respiratiou; but ere long they came at greater intervals, and then, in utter weariness, she slept, aud the consciousness that she did so, made Harrower almost content; but, houest fellow, no sleep came to his eyes; he was paiufully, acutely awake, and anxious only to remain so, though the events of the past day seemed oue long and terrible dream. Actually a year seemed to have passed since the wedding party assembled in the English church for the nuptials of Kate and Rowley Mellon.

A large and feathery palm branch protected Lena from the falling dew, as it drooped all over her like a natural canopy. Harrower could not resist the temptation to take one peep at her face, she slept so soundly, for terror and exhaustion had done their worst upon her.

"Thank Heaven," he murmured, "if uninjured by the dew, this deep sleep will prepare her for fresh exertion on the morrow."

He lifted aside the palm branch, and a white and silvery moonbeam fell on her pale face, which the cloak partly revealed, for she had stirred in a passing dream. As she slept, some fireflies, which he dared not dislodge, for fear of disturbing her, had

settled among her dark hair, and gave her a strangely fairy like aspect in the moonlight; but now the loving watcher softly spread the coarse cape of the gunner's cloak over her face; once more grasped his revolver and sat down alone to guard and to listen—the solitary sentinel over all he loved on earth!

With what sorrowful pleasure he had contemplated the faultless delicacy of that soft English face, which had all the dignity of high breeding, partaking of the unconscious air of refinement that was over all her tender person. Pale and wan, when awake, her eyes had all day been without the faintest look of composure, for a sudden, deep, and wasting grief consumed her; but now she was happily oblivious, silent, and calm under the load of sorrow that would again oppress her waking hours.

"How strange is all this—how this queer world wags!" thought Jack, who also thought a cheroot—he had floating visions of bitter beer and seltzer water, with beaujolais—would add greatly to his comfort; but he could no longer shout *qui hie*, for no valet was in attendance now. "How often I have wished for a ring, a faded ribbon, a glove that had been worn by Lena—more than all for a lock of her hair, even after she had cast me over for that muff Rudkin—not that I required anything to remind me of her, for she was never forgotten, nor those days at dear old Thorpe Audley—and now I have her here all alone with me, all to myself in the wild Indian jungle—my own Lena, trusting to me, the discarded Jack Harrower, for her life and safety; and she shall have both, if my heart's blood can ensure them. But she can only give me in return her thanks, her gratitude—gratitude, as any other woman might! Deuced hard this, for a fellow who has loved her as I have done—who loves her as I still do! It is passing strange all this; but I wish we had a few files of the Cornish Light Infantry to help us through it."

Jack now felt something of the truth of the axiom, that "the greatest luxury of love is its sense of protection, which curiously enough both precedes and follows love."

He could not have been asleep; he was too anxious and too much of a soldier for that; but, lulled by the intense solitude of the grove, after the fierce excitement of the past day, he had sunk into a reverie from which he was suddenly roused by seeing a man—a native—standing close by, in the full blaze of the moonlight, regarding both himself and the sleeper with grave and earnest attention.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A HINDOO FARMER.

SERIOUSLY alarmed, Harrower sprang up with his six-shooter half-cocked; but the stranger made a deprecating gesture, with a low salaam, and the next glance assured Jack that he was quite unarmed; but for all that, he might give an alarm, bring others on their track, and so prove dangerous; and, while reflecting for a moment, whether or not it would be justifiable expedience or wanton cruelty to pass his sword quietly through him, Harrower saw that he was a venerable Brahmin, with singularly regular, mild, and pleasing features—one of those who in many parts of India, still adhere to the simple costume of their race, as everywhere, and in all ages of the world, there have been, and ever will be men of "the old school."

His attire consisted simply of two long pieces of white cotton, one wrapped round the waist, and hanging below the knees, the other thrown across the shoulders loosely, so that at times it could be brought over the head, like the belted plaid of a Scottish highlander. His brown legs, reduced to mere bone and brawn, were bare, but he had on embroidered slippers, with turned-up toes. He wore ear-rings and bracelets which seemed valuable, and even an elaborate necklace was partly hidden by his beard, which was long and white, and perfectly undyed by indigo or henna, perhaps his first departure from the ancient and time-honoured customs of his people.

"Salaam, Sahib," he began, in Hindostanee, "be not alarmed! I am a peaceful old man, and the friend of your people."

"Salaam, to you," replied Jack, surlily, "but how am I to know that?"

"I am one who have neither the will nor the power to harm you," urged the Hindoo meekly.

"'Tis well; I am, as you see, well armed," said Harrower, sternly; "but who are you?"

"I am Khoda Bux, a Hindoo ryot (farmer) and contractor of grain for the cantonments at Delhi. I presume the sahib and the mem sahib are fugitives, fleeing for their lives after the terrors of yesterday."

"We are, old man, and I hope, for the sake of mercy, and of

she who is with me here, you will neither betray us to your own people, or to those of Mohammed Bahadoor Shah, who has too surely played the part of traitor."

"Brahma forbid!" replied the old man; "I have long traded in grain, rice, and maize, with your people—yea, ever since Wellesley Sahib defeated Sciudiah at the battle of Assaye, more than fifty years ago, when I was but a boy; and my youngest daughter, Safiyah, is an ayah in the family of padre Weston Sahib, who has ever treated her as one of his own children, and for his sake will I be true to my salt, and succour any of his people."

"What, are you the father of the ayah Safiyah, whom I have so often seen at Dr. Weston's? Here's luck!" shouted Jack, in English, and, with his usual impetuosity, explained the whole affair to Miss Weston, who, on hearing a conversation going on near her, had started up in very pardonable alarm.

"Khoda Bux!" she exclaimed.

"The eldest daughter of Weston Sahib, Missee Lena!" said the old Hindoo, salaaming, as he instantly recognised her, for he never had gone to the cantonments on commissariat business, without visiting his daughter at the doctor's house; "oh, this is sad indeed! and the padre sahib and his other children—and Safiyah—where are they?"

"Alas, Khoda, I know not—I know not!" replied Lena, wringing her hands; "asleep in death, but too probably."

"Living or dead the divine eyes of Brahma will be upon them," replied the Hindoo, into whose every-day life, like that of all the orientals, and the earlier Christians, religion entered largely. "I was saying a prayer by midnight in yonder temple, sahib—it is my custom—and fortunately chanced to pass this way. My house is close by; Missee Lena cannot stay here—the dew will kill her. Shabash! Come, at the risk of my life I will conceal and protect the daughter of the good Weston Sahib, who has been ever so kind to me!"

"Can we trust this queer old fellow?" whispered Jack, in English, close—very close—into Lena's ear.

"Oh yes," exclaimed Lena, in an excess of gratitude, "good old Khoda Bux knows us all so well, that I have no doubt he will be true to his salt."

"I have not forgotten how true the sepoys have been to that commodity," replied Harrower, "but on the first sign of treachery he is a dead man! Lead on, my friend," he added, in Hindostanee, while placing Lena once more on horseback. "I trust your dwelling is pretty near at hand, for the roads are all beset by those I would be loth to meet, while she is in my care."

The Hindoo farmer who had not too many words to spare, salaamed low, and pointing northward with his hand, led them through his own fields of wheat and maize, towards his house,

which stood about half a mile distant from the tank and grove of the Three Temples, near the hamlet of Soubapore, about six miles from Delhi, and fortunately in a woody and sequestered district.

Old Khoda Bux and his household received the fugitives with all the attention and kindness their circumstances required.

For three days they abode with him in peace and perfect seclusion, and Lena recovered a little strength, which was fortunate, as she had still much to undergo.

Inspired by the natural hope that the girl Safiyah, who was one of their many ayahs, or domestic servants (for the term does not at all times apply to a nurse), might leave the city, return to her father's house, and bring some tidings of the doctor and other lost ones, Lena remained for some time with a tolerable aspect of contentment, at the house of Khoda Bux, and Harrower frequently complimented and encouraged her, in his own fashion, by saying:

"Keep up your spirit as you do, Lena; bravo! you are the same plucky girl as ever!"

Compelled to remain close within doors, Jack and she found the house of Khoda Bux an almost intolerable residence. Like all the dwellings of the poorer ryots, it was small, badly ventilated, children, cattle, and poultry being nearly all under one roof; but this mattered little to Khoda or the women of his household, as they were all a-field by cock-crow, and at work with spade and hoe among the sugar canes and rice fields.

He invariably began the day with prayer, ablutions, and then a whiff of tobacco. His wife tended him at meals, and ate the scraps after, and though the old fellow had rather hazy ideas of the relationship, or tie, that existed between Lena and Harrower, he half hinted that she should do the same, and eat when the white sahib was done. Khoda was perhaps kinder to his horses and cattle than to the women of his household. As a Brahmin he was a thorough believer in the transmigration of souls; he knew that in the next state of existence he might figure as a horse, a cow, or even an alligator, but certainly not as a woman.

Constrained by circumstances to accommodate themselves to the occasion, they had to share—but at a board apart, and at a respectable distance, lest Khoda should lose caste by contamination—the native messes prepared for the old farmer and the males of the household. These were served up on little brass trays, lined with fresh leaves, and consisted of pillaws, pickles, and chutnies, coarse chupatties covered with ghee or rancid butter, and cakes, that caused Lena to shudder, for they were made of grease, pepper, and sugar—the leaves used being always those of the banian tree, which is sacred among the Hindoos, and

is especially worshipped by those who have children. A draught of pure water from a *ghurrah*, or carthenware pot, with two handles, completed such a repast as this, after which Khoda would fondle his male grand-children for an hour or so; take a chupatty, an onion or so for his evening meal, and go again into the fields. So would pass the day, and still no tidings came from the city.

While faring thus, Jack began to have some English longings for a beef-steak, or a broiled bone, but dared not hint of such a thing, as the cow was sacred to Brahma, "and so, confound it, seems everything that is worth eating!" he muttered under his moustache.

Though, as a Hindoo, Khoda naturally despised women—for among them no wife ever looks for kindness, or even attention, from her husband, who disdains even to mention her name, or to permit her to eat, until he has entirely finished—Khoda had seen enough of what he considered the fantastic customs of the Europeans, to sympathise to a certain extent with Lena in her sorrow.

"Child," said he in Hindostanee, quoting a Hindoo prayer, "do not weep. 'As a drop of water moves on the leaf of the lotus; thus, or more slippery is the life, even of the just; the company of the virtuous endures here but for a moment; that is the chariot to bear thee over land and ocean. Set not thy affections on foe or friend, on father or relative, in war or in peace; bear an equal mind towards all, and if thou desirest it, thou wilt soon be like Vishnu.'"

"What on earth can all this be about?" thought Harrower, who had quite failed to follow.

But to please Lena, Khoda Bux rode into Delhi on the evening of the third day, in search of intelligence.

He had barely been gone two hours, when he came galloping back to his dwelling with great perturbation expressed in his face.

"You must fly from hence at once, sahib," said he; "there is not a moment to be lost."

"What the deuce is up now, Khoda sahib?"

"A great body of mutineers, led by Soubadar Pershad Sing, are coming out of Delhi by the Cashmere Gate, to scour all the country, and as one of my people has joined them, I fear you may have been betrayed by him, and that my house will be searched."

"Oh, Khoda Bux," said Lena, "I fear your people are very wicked!"

"Why should they be otherwise?"

"How?"

"Is not wickedness sown broadcast over the world, like tares and weeds among the grain? Brahma ordained it should be so,

for a time, till at the last day Seva shall destroy all, as your people have been destroyed in Delhi, for they tell me that not one European has escaped."

"Blundering old muff!" muttered Harrower, who saw the deadly pallor that spread over Lena's face at these words, "but others may have escaped as we have done."

"And, like us, have found kind protectors, Khoda," said Lena, putting out her hand; but the pure Brahmin shrunk back from her touch.

"The people are more exasperated than ever," said he, "for now Mohammed Shah and Mirza Mogul have proclaimed in the mosques and bazaars, by the mouths of the imams and dervishes, that your eastern war,* having left a great many widows, the Queen of England was about to send them here to marry them to the great chiefs of Oude, and the Zemindars of Delhi, so that their children might inherit the land, and be brought up as Christians."

"Lena, can you conceive how such perilous stuff as this is believed in by those dingy fools?" said Harrower.

But this story, and many artful fabrications of a similar nature, were greedily believed and listened to, by the credulous natives of India.

"But now, sahib, away! To think of reaching Meerut is impossible——"

"Where then?"

"There is but one way, ride north; I can but advise and commit you to the care of Brahma, or your own gods—and to night, the daughter of Heaven."

"North, Khoda—but to where?"

"To the great forest that lies between Soonput-Jheend and Kythul."

"The Lahore railroad was to go that way, but there is an end to all such things just now. And the nearest part of this forest——"

"Lies distant, fifteen coses of Delhi."

"The devil! more than twenty miles, English," thought Jack; "we may be concealed there before morning; but how will she endure the privations to which she must be inevitably subjected?"

"Do not, as you value your lives, sleep under a tamarind tree," said Khoda Bux.

"Why?" asked Jack.

"Because its shadow produces leprosy; nor under a cocoa-nut tree without a prayer, because it is holy, and once produced children, till Brahma ordained that it should bring forth nuts alone."

* The Crimea.

"Decidedly Brahma had an eye to the parochial rates," said Harrower.

"The forest is full of ruined temples and old tombs—there you will find shelter easily."

"Ruined temples and old tombs—ugh!"

"Safe shelter, Sahib, till the present danger is past. I will give you food—chupatties—"

"I shudder at the name of that ill-omened cake!" said Lena.

"Rice, eggs, chillis, and a ghurrah for water; quick—do I not hear a shout? Away! lest disgrace, and then death, be your *nusweeb-kismet*.* May their fathers be burnt!—those ungrateful dogs of Delhi. Hah! 'be my brother, or I will kill thee,' is a fine old Mohammedan proverb!"

While he muttered and talked, old Khoda, active as an eel, was making himself extremely useful; he buckled a lady's saddle—a strange old affair it was—on the artillery horse, for Lena; of a shawl his wife improvised a skirt for her, and she was soon mounted. A bag containing some provisions was slung to the saddle; Harrower once more looked to his pistols, presented Khoda with his bullion epaulettes, and some other ornaments of his uniform, which were useless now, and might only prove the means of detection, if the sun or moon shone on them; and taking Lena's horse by the bridle, guided for a few miles by the old Hindoo farmer, they once more set out on their perilous pilgrimage, just as the night began to close around them.

Khoda assured them that the road towards the forest was lonely and totally unfrequented; they kindly and gratefully bade him adieu, and keeping well to the south of the canal of Ali Merdan Khan, they hastened on, Lena with a sinking heart, and Harrower with an anxious one, for neither knew what an hour—even ten minutes—might bring forth; but he strove to be cheerful, and defy Fortune.

"Now, Lena," said he, "whip up that old artillery daisy-cutter—make him trot; he goes as lazily as if still traced to his old nine-pounder."

"But you will be left behind."

"No fear of that; I can follow you at a good steady double, as we Light Infantry men say; and I am used to the pace. Moreover, I can cover the rear more effectually if we are pursued. The road seems narrowing to a species of gorge."

"Oh! Harrower—oh, poor Jack! you will certainly kill yourself by running after me in that manner!" she exclaimed, as her horse trotted, and her lover ran to keep pace with it.

"Fear not, Lena," said he; "go ahead! For three miles I

* Fate—destiny.

could go on thus, without even a five-minutes' halt, and I am close on six feet, you know."

"But over such a road!"

"It certainly is a devil of a road—and was never known to Macadam; but I've seen worse, when we served in Scinde."

Long before midnight they had reached, unseen and unmolested, the skirts of the great forest indicated by Khoda Bux, and then they halted to consider what was to be done next, for an Indian forest, even if one is without human foes, is by no means the most pleasant place in the world wherein to pass the night, especially without a large fire, as a means of counteracting the effects of the dew, and to scare wild animals away.

"Nothing in this world is ever so bad, Lena, but it might be worse."

"Oh, Jack! what *could* be worse?" she exclaimed.

"If, instead of being May, this month was August, the rainy season, when for nights and days the whole sky seems to descend in ceaseless sheets of water, what would be our predicament then?"

"True, Jack—true: I am most ungrateful."

"So let us thank Heaven it is May—though we cannot call it a merry month," said Harrower, pointing to the beautiful moon, whose radiance silvered all the wonderful luxuriance of the dense forest, into which they penetrated a little way.

Often they were compelled to pause almost hopelessly among the jungle, a leafy wilderness, where the birds of Paradise, scared from their nests, were perching on the branches, in all the glory of their plumage, and where some of the most highly-prized plants, only to be met with in hothouses in Europe, were growing wild, as buttercups or daisies do at home.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

IN THE FOREST OF SOONPUT.

A DREAD that Lena might be seized by an illness, perhaps a fever, on his hands, haunted Harrower incessantly, for what should he do then? India is the land of fevers; but even if such an extremity of evil did not come to pass, there was every prospect of her becoming ultimately exhausted by all she had undergone, or might yet have to undergo.

The three days of bodily rest and seclusion at the house of Khoda Bux had been a most fortunate circumstance, occurring as they did so soon after the wild tumult and terrible excitement of the flight from Delhi.

"Hark, Harrower!" said Lena, as they forced their way laboriously through the forest, inteut only on finding a safe and secluded place of concealment; "what sound is that?"

"A sound there is no mistaking," said Harrower, bitterly; "it is a sepoy bugle sounding the 'advance-double-quick.' Some of those fellows must certainly be on our track, guided perhaps by Khoda's treacherous servant; and if so, we have just got here in time."

"Oh, Harrower! where will all this end?" exclaimed Lena.

Harrower sighed, but made no immediate reply, for where or how it would all end Heaven alone knew.

Some shrill hallooing now came on the night breeze, which was warm and gentle; but after a time even these sounds died away, and nothing was heard but the footsteps of Harrower and of the horse he led, as they crashed and trod down the thick leaves and dry fallen branches which lay in the dingle they traversed.

So thick were the branches overhead that at times almost perfect darkness reigned below them. In other places the moon poured down a flood of silver sheen that lighted up the dewy grass, the stems and plants, as if they were gemmed with diamonds or coated with crystal.

Ere long Lena's horse began to stumble among stones or masses of fallen masonry, over which an elaborate network of creepers, the growth of many years, was spread. Some arches and fallen columns next appeared, and before them stood one of the ruins to which Khoda Bux had referred—a fragment of an old Hindoo temple apparently.

Two arches of the Moorish or horse-shoe form, about eight feet high, were still entire; but the pillars from which they sprung were buried to their capitals by the stones that had fallen from above aud the rank luxuriance of the vegetation of centuries.

Rocks or masonry closed up those arches on one side, making each a species of vault, and after discharging a half cartridge of his revolver into cach, to ascertain that both were clear of anything dangerous, Harrower selected one as a slecping place for Lena, and therein he deposited her, with all their earthly possessions; to wit, the bag of provisions, the old artillery cloak, and the ghurrah, which he filled with water from a runnel.

The horse was easily disposed of, being simply haltered to a tree, where, however, he might soon become the victim of a tiger, if one chanced to pass that way; and now again, as on the first night of their disasters, Harrower posted himself a sentinel, and sat upon some masonry at the mouth of the ruiued arch, gazing alternately at the reclining form of Lena, or listlessly out into the forest that surrounded them.

A whispered "good night" was all they said, for conjecture or surmise had all been exhausted long ago.

Harrower knew not whether Lena slept, as he spoke no more, lest he might wake her, if happily she had found a temporary oblivion of their desolate condition. He was content to keep a guard over her while night lasted; but who was to keep the same guard over him when nature became exhausted, and a necessity for sleep inexorably came?

Though a soldier, he could not but feel the loss of many a luxury that Indian service had rendered a necessity and a second nature. There were no iced wines now, no tattywallah to drench the hot mattings and cool the air, uo punkah or hookah with its snaky coils, no mosquito curtains, no Bass's pale ale, not even a cigar!

"But why should I regret all these things?" thought he; "how much more must poor Lena suffer!"

Few things in India strike one more than the wonderful luxuriance of the vegetation in some places. There in the forest of Soonput, the giant size of the banian, the mango, and cocoa-nut trees, of the graceful creepers that twined round them, and the form and colours of the flowers that grew below, formed a striking contrast to all that Britain could show in the same way; for the great red piues of a Scottish forest or the stateliest oaks of an Euglish chase were as garden shrubs to some of those trees that cast their shadows over the ruin where Lena and Harrower lurked, like a couple of gipsies or outcasts—she the belle of many a ball-room, and he a dashing officer of one of our crack regiments of the line!

And there, too, were creepers and vine trailers covered with wonderful scarlet and blue flowers, in festoons a hundred feet

long, woven from branch to branch minutely as a gossamer web, while below spread the feathery jungle grass and the prickly pear: aud through every opening in the roof of foliage overhead, the brilliant moonbeams shot aslant their flakes of silver light, reminding the watcher of the most glorious effects of the pantomimist, in his "trausformation scene."

Harrower's mind was full of strange, and, at times, not unpleasing thoughts. He was a single-hearted and high-souled fellow, and uow something of the love of a father for a daughter, of a brother for a younger sister, of a lover for his love, of a protector for the feeble oue that clings helplessly to him, seemed all to bleud in Jack's sturdy yet tender heart, for Lena, and there was much of genuine chivalry in it too.

He loved her as dearly—more perhaps than ever; yet cast as she was now upon his care, he studiously resolved that no hint of that love should ever escape him, though he fouud great difficulty in keeping his determination.

Lena was there, but his destiny was a strange one! He had no right to kiss away a single tear, to clasp her in his arms, to keep her there, assuring her that he loved her still, and that she was still his owu; and yet it was impossible to forget, that she from whom he was compelled to keep so respectfully aloof, had beeu ouce his betrothed wife.

Anon there came other cmotions, those of anger, even of ferocity against those who had wrought her so much suffering, and who thirsted for her life; of his own—she once safe—he recked but little! How strange, wild and melodramatic, after all the *past*, was their sudden seclusion from the world, and this daily iutercouse between them.

"Ah, if I should ouly be saving her for Mark Rudkin, after all!" was Harrower's most worryiug thought.

He was neither fanciful nor romantic, but somehow on this night there came to his mind vivid thoughts of his home in Cornwall, of his family fireside and the faces of the dead; of the bleak hills and the peak of Caddonburrow, with his little patrimonial dwelling, the tenants of which he envied at that time of peril. Aud then he thought of the quaint chapel hard by, built by one of his ancestors, who had been a crusader—tradition said; for his effigy was there, cross-legged, with sword at side, shield on arm, and his hands clasped in prayer; and he remembered how that grim effigy had been an object of terror in boyhood, all the more that the name carved on the tomb was the same as his own—"Johan de Harrower, Miles." His family had for ages been buried in and around that little Norman fane, and many monumental brasses testified to the fame they had borne among the men of Cornwall, long ago. Would he ever lie there?

"Why the deuce will that old place recur to me again and

again?" thought he; "awfully slow work this—I think a cheroot would cheer me."

The place and the whole circumstances were certainly calculated to inspire solemn thoughts, for an impressive silence reigned around him. The sunbeams, even of the Indian noon, had scarcely ever penetrated the interwoven foliage, or reached the masses of giant leaves, strange creepers and bright yellow pumpkins, that lay below; and on the sprays hung great globules of shining dew, the plash of which on the lower leaves alone made any sound; once only was the grave-like stillness broken by a strange bird winging its way swiftly overhead, and a second time, perhaps, by a snake. Harrower could see its writhing coils, glittering like burnished metal, as it glided through the grass and weeds below.

So passed the night.

Day broke and still found Harrower sleepless and at his post, when Lena, who for some time had been sorrowfully regarding him, came forth from the arch under which she had slept, and kindly, almost caressingly, laid a hand on his shoulder. He was cold and stiff—chilled almost to the very marrow in his bones, by his night-watch, and the dew was dank and wet on his thick moustache and curly dark hair, yet the touch of that beloved hand sent a thrill to his heart.

"Lena!" said he.

She gave him a sad, an earnest, and steadfast glance, that had something noble and winning in it.

"Good morning, Lena," said he; "you slept well, I trust?"

"I did sleep a little, Harrower," she replied, "thanks to your care and kindness; but oh, my poor friend, how chilled you are—such work as this will kill you."

"Fear not for me," said he, with a cheerfulness that was very well assumed, as he wiped the dew from his revolver carefully, and replaced it in the pouch at his belt; "I am not so easily killed, Lena; but I know," he added smiling, "that you must have bivouacked by the roadside, or in a wet jungle, for a month or so, ere you will know the real comfort and value of a soft blanket and an English feather bed."

"Thank Heaven we have both been spared to see another day," said Lena; "now I shall watch while *you* sleep, and I am quite sure I could fire a pistol at anything."

"First you must prepare some breakfast from Khoda's bag, while I ungirth and groom our nag; for much of your safety depends upon how we can keep him fit for service, and see how mournfully he shakes the dew from his pendant ears."

So the day passed like the night, without adventure or disturbance; and Harrower, after Lena had long urged, and only when the absolute necessity of yielding came upon him, had a

brief doze in the forenoon. After this, he examined the ruins and came to the conclusion, that until he could scheme out a steady and sure plan of procedure in some direction, no better place of concealment could be found.

The ruin was almost shapeless now; and whether it had been a tomb, a temple, or a dwelling, it was impossible to decide. Built on a small knoll, at the base of which flowed a *nuddee*, or rivulet of pure water; it was a mere wilderness of fallen stones amid which the two arches alone preserved any form. In one of these, Harrower stabled the horse and quartered himself; the other he apportioned to Lena, piling up in front of it, and in the entrance, several large stones as a barrier in case of a sudden attack from sepoys, or any wild animal. For a time he could defend this narrow opening, as he had still his sword, with nearly sixty rounds of ammunition for his pistols.

Several times he ventured to leave Lena in this strange abode, and crept through the forest by the way they had entered it, to search for friend or foe, but without seeing either.

The chupatties smeared with ghee, the pepper cakes, and dried fruits given them by the frugal Khoda Bux, with water from the adjacent *nuddee*, formed their only viands; but the former were soon disposed of, and the evening of the third day saw the little store exhausted, and no prospect before them, save that of starving in the wilderness.

Even Harrower's courage and cheerfulness began to sink now. He saw how pale and sunken Lena's cheek was becoming, and that a patch of dark skin was visible under her soft and saddened eyes. Her fine hair was growing matted; for there was no ayah now, with nimble fingers, to dress, perfume, and wreathe it into beautiful braids.

Resolving that something energetic must be attempted, on the third evening, Harrower, full of much thought, sat muttering to himself as the darkness was closing.

"Harrower, what are you saying?" asked Lena, as they sat side by side, staring out into the depths of the forest.

"Well, Lena—don't laugh at me, for perhaps you may think it is not quite my way—but I was thanking God that I had been enabled thus far to protect you, and praying for strength to do more."

"How could I laugh at you, dear Jack, for such thoughts as these?" she exclaimed.

Jack's moustached lip was quivering as she spoke, and his clear eyes moistened; but Lena's drooped, for she felt that there was beginning to be again a tender *bond* between Harrower and herself.

He, on his part, had great difficulty in keeping to his resolutions, especially when Lena, after a pause, said in a low voice, and with hesitation——

"And after all the past—you—you love me still, Jack?"

"Oh, Lena—you know I do——"

"I remember to have read somewhere," said she hurriedly, to prevent him saying more, "but where, I know not, that love is better in a novel than in every day life, and that 'of all the roads to contentment, it is the most intricate and thorny, and people are so often wearied by the length and roughness of the way, that before they arrive at the long sought out possession, they find it not worth the trouble of the journey.'"

"I am no misanthrope; I have not yet learned to feel thus, Lena, 'case-hardened' though I am. To love you once, Lena, is to love you for ever!" said poor Jack, forgetting his chivalric resolve and quite breaking down; "but pardon me, Lena," he added, suddenly, "for this, I know, is neither a fitting time or place to talk of love to you."

"I thank you for your great delicacy, dear Harrower; but let us be friends always, and friends *only*."

"Why, Lena?"

"We shall find the tenderness and attachment of friendship—especially after all we have undergone, more enduring—"

"Than those of love?"

"Yes."

"You speak for yourself, Lena," said Jack, gloomily; "I have never changed—"

"No, dear Jack," said Lena, while her pale cheek actually reddened, for she felt that the conversation was taking a perilous turn; "and I because—because I *did* change, am no longer worthy of you."

"Talk not so, Lena—now at least—"

"But amid the grief and horror we have endured and are enduring, do let us speak of something else."

"True, Lena—I feel justly the slight reproach your words convey," replied Jack, who, to do him justice, was certainly not the first to broach the forbidden topic; "I had made a mental promise not to disturb your sorrow by my own selfish thoughts; but now I shall talk to you of a plan—or rather a resolution—I have formed. I have plenty of ammunition and am a very fair marksman either with rifle or pistol; but if I shoot anything here the report might bring we know not who upon us, and then without fuel or light how are we to cook anything when shot? To remain here is to starve; so by dawn to-morrow, or an hour before it—whatever the risk or danger may be—I shall ride back to the house of Khoda Bux in search of more food and intelligence. Six days have elapsed now since the retreat from Delhi, and we know not what turn events may have taken in that time."

CHAPTER XL.

ALONE.

"FOR your own sake, Harrower, I implore you to be wary," said Lena, as he prepared to depart next day, while the morning star was yet twinkling through the gloom of the forest, where she shuddered to be left alone.

"For *your* sake will I, rather," said he, cheerfully.

"No—no—think not of me."

"Whom else have I to think of, Lena? To me your life is a sacred trust."

"But not beyond your own."

"Yes—yes; a thousand times beyond my own!" he exclaimed, impetuously. "I can make my way well through the wood and jungle, Lena, so fear not for me. I have had my full share of hog spearing, snipe shooting, and tiger hunting, mounted on a shikaree (*i.e.* trained) elephant, and all these were not for nothing, or without enabling me to pick up some knowledge of wild places such as this; only that we have neither the golden mess-sherry, or the sparkling Simpkin,* to make things pleasant."

Harrower calculated that he would be absent from Lena about four hours; they had already been three days and nights in the forest, without molestation or alarm, and it would be singular if in the former short space of time anything untoward should occur to her. He left with her one of his revolvers, shewing her how to use it if necessary; and he implored her to remain closely concealed in the ruin, and not to leave it whatever she might see or hear; and then kissing her hand, he mounted, and disappeared in the shadowy twilight of the forest dingle, hastily and abruptly, as if he dreaded—which he really did—to protract their adieu.

Then indeed did Lena, as she looked at the dial of her watch, by the faint glimmer of the dawn, feel alone!

As the light came in with its tropical rapidity, and the sun rose above the forest, pouring a flood of radiance through every opening, her heart became a little more easy, her spirit more buoyant, she breathed more freely; she strove to feel more hopeful, and quite forgot that she was without food, which was fortunate, as not even the fragment of a chupatty remained.

* Anglo-Indian for Champagne.

If Harrower was attacked and wounded by hostile natives, it might be the means of causing both him and her to perish, and if he was killed outright, or by any force of circumstances, could return no more, what then would become of her, without a friend, a guide or protector, alone, in that vast forest which covers the whole tract of country for so many miles north of the city of Delhi?

She thought the reflection selfish, and how bitter would be the gratification, that then she might weep freely for the loss of one, who had never ceased to think of *her*.

Harrower might return no more, and never might she know the reason why, or learn his fate. She felt the agonies of all this by anticipation, and had done so on the preceding evening when Jack first broached his plan; but the necessity for adopting some line of action, with the chance that he might see Safiyah (if she had returned to her father's house) made her acquiesce, in her great anxiety to learn something of her own family and the state of affairs, in Delhi; but now that Jack was gone, she began to feel herself, as we have said, alone—most terribly alone.

"Poor fellow—poor dear fellow!" she repeated to herself, "how steadily he maintains that I was his first love, and shall be his last love! I don't deserve such faith."

"Thank Heaven that I was not thrown on the mercy, humanity, and companionship of Mark Rudkin!" she thought, after a pause; "that would now have been intolerable. At this moment I think I can see his cold and supercilious smile, his proud and unyielding bearing. But poor Mark—I wonder if he escaped with life!"

It never occurred to Lena, or to Harrower either, probably, that their isolated situation was in some respects an awkward one. If it did, neither of them spoke of it, or ventured to approach the subject; but not even the veriest prudes of Calcutta —that famous place for *gup*, or gossip—could have found the most slender handle for it, in the fact of their being cast thus together, under all the circumstances, as fugitives, to save their lives, to escape from torture and dishonour; for in the terrible time of the mutiny, when happy households and loving family circles were scattered far and wide, men were thankful to entrust wives, children, and sisters to the care of all, or any, who could protect them, the sole bond, the greatest tie of all, being community of race, religion, or colour.

Left now entirely to her own reflections, Lena became absorbed in the most bitter and harassing thoughts.

The intense but futile longing to hear again her father's voice—to see the faces of her sisters—to learn their adventures (alas! if they survived), and to tell her own, grew painful at times. Would she ever again see the thin silver hairs and the benign features of her father? Kate's soft and beautiful face, and the gay, girlish

brightness of Polly—the light-hearted and laughing Polly, who used to boast playfully that she "could wind papa, Lena, Dicky, and every one else round her tiny finger, like a skein of silk?"

The loss of Willie was one of Lena's greatest griefs, for she had ever been as a mother to the little orphan cousin, who nestled at night beside her, and she was never tired of caressing his golden curls, of kissing his dimpled cheeks; and so the bright smile and the winning ways of the once happy child came vividly before her now.

That pretty baby boy whom she had so petted! If alive, where and with whom was he now? Treated as a Feringhee slave, perhaps, and to be reared as such! He used to be lavish of his kisses and caresses, especially to her, and as Lena thought of all his loving and artless ways, she mourned that the poor little affectionate heart might be cast among those who would coarsely, perhaps savagely, thrust its wealth of love and tenderness back upon itself.

But that little heart might be still enough now, for she remembered that the sepoys slew all male children at once—there was no temporary reservation for them!

Too probably never more would she see any of those loved ones—never more hear their voices.

Never more! There was something terrible in the conviction; and then, once again, forgetting that "a great sorrow nobly borne, is a great dignity," she would indulge, unseen, in all the luxury of wild, unutterable woe.

Now that she was alone her courage completely gave way, and she reproached herself for not accompanying Harrower, and sharing every peril he might encounter. Better it was to face and know the worst, than endure the lingering torments of suspense.

Often while watching and guarding her as a sentinel during her snatches of troubled sleep, he had heard her in plaintive and yearning terms mention the names of her "papa, Kate, and Polly;" even "little Willie," and many others, but never *his own*.

"Well, well," Jack would think, "I must forgive her that omission; amid her sore trouble, why should she think of a great hulking fellow like me?"

The first hour of his absence passed quickly enough, for Lena was full of exciting thoughts, and from the time they had all entered the Flagstaff Tower, she had scarcely been alone till now. The second hour passed more slowly; then the third and fourth seemed long and weary, and after that, Time appeared to lag, as if its wheels stood still.

Lena consulted her watch—her mamma's it had been, given to her by papa on a birthday, that seemed to have happened ages ago.

"Noon—noon—and he not yet returned!" she exclaimed.

She bent her gaze keenly down the forest vista by which she

expected to see him come, but there was no movement yonder. Not a breath of wind stirred a leaf or twig, and the rays of the sun poured steadily aslant the silent dingle through the openings, and unchanging, as if painted in a picture.

She listened intently, but could hear only the beating of her heart and the loud but solemn hum of insect life around her; and then as noon passed away, and the sun's rays fell more aslant, there came forth a heavy odour of forest leaves and of flowers, self-sown, budding, blooming, or decaying; and this odour filled all the air above and below.

Poor Lena looking for his return, even as a bird in its lonely nest watches for the coming day, felt her misery increasing, and with it the conviction that this might only be the beginning of the dreaded end.

In her father's household at Delhi she had been accustomed to the attendance of at least thirty native servants, from the durwan who kept the door, to the dog-boy who had charge of Willie's terrier, including cooks, mattees, who cleaned the plate, lit the candles, and an ayah for herself and each of her sisters.

She felt sorely athirst. Harrower had thoughtfully filled the ghurrah with water from the runnel, but she had overturned it, spilling the contents. Her throat was parched, and yet she dared not venture from the ruin to refill the vessel or to suck berries in the wood, so what a change was here! She had to lie there, enduring all the heat and thirst of India, without a single alleviation—she who had been accustomed to so many attendants, and whose slightest wish was never ungratified.

There was no gentle ayah now with her feather fan to watch her, and handle the soft puff of tender wool dipped in cooling pearl powder; no forenoon siesta in a light *robe de chambre;* no shady verandah into which the respectful and obedient kitmutgar could place the luxurious *fauteuil* on which she might recline and court the evening breeze from the gardens of the Jumna.

Suddenly a human figure caught Lena's eye. It was that of a man, a native, in a red cotton turban, and clad only with the dhottee (or short Indian substitute for trowsers) of the same material. A kind of basket was slung on his back, and a knife was stuck in his girdle. He was crawling through the jungle grass, on his hands and knees, at some distance from the ruins, and so high rose the feathery green herbage, that at times little more than the top of his red turban was visible.

For a moment her heart stood still, and then it beat with painful rapidity. She shrunk down and grasped the revolver; but so unstrung were her nerves and so violently did she tremble, that she could scarcely cock the weapon, or lift it.

She crouched down within the ruined arch and close behind the barrier of stones that Jack had built in front of it, expecting every instant to see the scarlet turban and the dark face with its

gleaming eyes and white teeth appear; but half an hour—a month it seemed—passed on; all remained still, and when, after a time, she peeped forth fearfully again, the crawling native had disappeared.

His motions had been singular and stealthy, and had served greatly to alarm and discompose her; and now, after all the weary excitement of waiting and watching since daybreak, overcome by heat and the recent shock to her nervous system, a faintness came over the poor girl, and she sank into sleep for a time.

But Lena, though she knew it not, had been seen by the red turbanned Indian, who at the very moment that slumber closed her eyes, was creeping slowly and stealthily on his hands and knees, and with his knife in his teeth, up the back of the knoll from where the runnel flowed, to explore the ruins, from amid which he had detected a pale face appear—the face of a woman of the Ghora Logue, or white people.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE AYAH.

AFTER quitting the forest, Harrower rode rapidly to the eastward, adhering, as closely as he could remember, to the path by which he had come on the night of their flight from the house of Khoda Bux, and keeping to the south of the canal, or aqueduct of Ali Merdhan Khan, which was so thoroughly repaired by our Government in 1820, when the whole population of Delhi went out to meet the stream, throwing into it sweetmeats and flowers, the old king, Mohammed Bahadoor Shah, leading the way.

From thence Harrower rode on till he reached the narrow way through the fields of cotton and sugar cane, and ere long, he saw before him the quaint but humble dwelling, which had afforded to himself and his delicate companion a three days' shelter.

The sun was up now, and while Harrower reined in his horse and reconnoitred the house before approaching it, he saw with satisfaction the thin spare figure of Khoda Bux, clad as usual in

the two shapeless pieces of spotless white cotton, with his venerable beard floating in the soft breeze, as he came forth hoe in hand, to head his labourers in the sugar field.

His dark face and nervous manner expressed alike displeasure and alarm on recognizing Harrower, whom he begged—but in somewhat peremptory terms—to begone.

"I generally keep up the Anglo-Indian custom of having a ride or a walk before breakfast, Khoda Bux," said Harrower, attempting to put a cheerful face on the matter; "but on this morning I am come in search of the very meal I mention."

"Your presence here before, might have cost me very dear, sahib," replied the old farmer, "those sons of burnt fathers, the sepoys, were about to destroy my dwelling, and would have done so, but for the authority of Pershad Sing, now Colonel of the Mapert-ka-Pultan, whose caste is as good as my own, and who protected me."

"I am sorry to hear of the risk you have run, good Khoda," said Harrower, "but I have returned for food; the daughter of the good Weston Sahib is starving in the forest yonder."

"You found shelter?"

"Yes—in a ruin."

"I thought you could not fail to do so—the forest is full of old buildings. My daughter Safiyah has returned in safety from Delhi."

"And what news does she bring?"

"You can ask her—for see, she comes hither."

As Khoda spoke, his daughter, a middle-aged woman possessing keen, but handsome and even pleasing features, with enormous gold rings in her ears and wearing a dress of bright yellow cotton, which flowed over her head, shoulder, and skirts, came hurriedly forward. Between her and Harrower the recognition was quite mutual, and she wept as she kissed his hand.

"Now hasten away, sahib," said Khoda, with impatience, as he disdained this display of emotion, and as a Hindoo disliked a female of his household attracting special notice, "remember that as the price of my own life and of the lives of all who are dear to me, I promised to the Souhadar Pershad Sing, that never again should my roof give shelter to a Feringhee, and I must keep my word, for though old, I am not prepared to die, and as our holiest prayer has it, 'since the tree when felled, springs again from the root, from what root springs mortal man, when felled by the hand of death?'"

Of the family of Dr. Weston, the maid servant, Safiyah, could give Harrower no intelligence, save that the Kitmutgar, Assim Alee, had lured the Doctor into the city, where he totally disappeared, "though the Mem Sahibs were told that he had gone, with Missee Pollee, to the Flagstaff Tower."

That such was not the case, Harrower knew well, and told

her so; on which she wrung her hands with apprehensions of treachery.

"The mutineers are swelling rapidly into a great Mohammedan and Hindoo army," continued the Ayah, "the great Nana Sahib is in arms at the head of all the Mahrattas, of whom he is to be king, so the standard of the monkey-god will be unfurled against the British, by the side of the banner of the prophet."

"These are tidings from which small hope can be gathered," said Harrower.

"They have chopped into ammunition all the magical lightning rods, by which, they say, your people, with the aid of Eblis, could whisper their secrets from Calcutta to Lahore, and in an instant, though the distance between them is nearly seven hundred cosses of Delhi."

"You mean the telegraph wire?"

"Yes, sahib."

"The fools!" exclaimed Harrower, with a pretty common English adjective in addition.

From Safiyah, he learned how Judge Leslie and several others had been taken out of a mosque after many days of hunger and thirst, and all shot in the burning sunshine by the sepoys of Pershad Sing; and from her, he learned also, the still more awful fate of at least one of his daughters in the market-place. Harrower shuddered, and his blood grew alternately feverish and icy.

"Oh for the bayonets of the Thirty-Second!" he exclaimed.

And these Leslies—the two brilliant, proud, and rather imperious Scotch beauties, who never entered a ball-room without looking around it with a sweeping gaze to court admiration—poor girls! thought Harrower, such an ending! What availed now their thousands in Indian bonds, the Sudder judge's shares in the Agra, and his East India Railway scrip.

"I must not tell this to Lena—Heavens! it would kill her, while the fate of Kate and Polly remain unknown!" said Harrower, aloud.

While Khoda, inspired by haste to get rid of a troublesome visitor, quite as much as by hospitality, was bringing some provisions from the house, and while Harrower was conversing with the ayah, and was deeply interested in all she had to relate, a native, who had been grubbing to all appearance very sedulously with his hoe, but who had been listening intently the while, now stole stealthily away through the sugar-canes, towards an adjacent village, with the full intention of rousing certain fanatics, and having the way to the forest beset, or the fugitives tracked out in the lurking-place they had chosen.

On learning that her young mistress to whom she was greatly attached, "Missee Weston—Missee Lena," as she called her, was

alone in the forest of Soonput, the faithful ayah became very much excited, and, with a flood of tears, insisted on making her way there; but Harrower felt that however great the comfort of such an attendant would be to Lena, the fact of having another female to protect would only add to his own troubles and difficulties.

He proposed, however, that if matters suited, and all remained quiet, to return on the second day, and meet her near the grove of the Three Temples; and then he rode off towards Soonput, while the morning sun was yet low in the sky, and the dew lay deep and wet on every shrub and tree.

On the morning of the second day, and of the third and fourth, and of many succeeding days, the affectionate ayah went to the beautiful grove of the three white marble temples to keep her appointment, but she went on a futile errand, for "poor Harrower Sahib" never appeared again.

Chupatties of unleavened flour, rice cakes, and dried fruits were all that the frugal larder of the abstemious Hindoo household could furnish once more; yet with these Jack Harrower gladly urged his horse at its best speed towards the forest.

It is Addison who observes somewhere, that of all disappointments one of love is the most difficult to overcome; that the passion itself softens and debilitates the heart, and renders it quite unable to resist adversity or suffering.

This may be the case, perhaps, at home, in the piping times of peace, and in a land with well-ordered laws; but far away in that wild country, where all was war, tumult, and devastation, Harrower felt himself inspired by his love, and enabled by the very peculiarity of his circumstances with Lena Weston, to rise superior to all adversity, and to feel that he could face the black devil himself, if he came within range of his pistols.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE SNAKE CHARMER.

"Poor Lena!" thought Harrower, "I would that I might provide better fare for you than this. Chupatties and ghee—ugh! for civilized beings like us who can appreciate delicate soups, and elaborate entrées—even a slice of good English roast beef, the leg of a well-fed South-down, or highland mutton, with salad and dessert; this is a change with a vengeance—a change all the greater after curries and chutnies, and other provocations of the Anglo-Indian appetite!"

The sharp whizzing of a shot or two, which missed him, followed by an uncouth yell, made Harrower start, and in an instant he found the narrow path beset by some twenty natives, bare-legged and bare-armed, as usual, but having bamboo hog-spears, clubs, and matchlocks. At least six of the party were furnished with the latter species of weapon, but, luckily, the matches were damp, and they did not all give fire.

One assailant launched a hog-spear, which might have inflicted a serious, perhaps a mortal wound, but it only ripped open the left shoulder of Harrower's jacket, and merely scratched him, scarcely drawing blood.

Discharging the chambers of his revolver in quick succession, he shot down three, and making a dash through the rest, sword in hand, stabbed or rode down three more. Then pricking his horse with the point of the blade shortened in his hand, being without spurs, he galloped it at a speed which soon left his pursuers far behind. They followed him, however, uttering yells and maledictions as long as he was in sight; and to lure them from the direct path to the forest, he made a detour to the left, through some open fields and corn, even at the perilous risk of being seen by others, but on finding that he had fairly left his assailants some miles in the rear, he turned his horse's head again towards the forest of Soonput, and rode more at leisure.

He was literally bathed in perspiration; his heart was beating wildly with rage and excitement, and it was not until he began to reload his pistol, that he found his arms and shoulders were stiff and sore by the blows he had received from clubs and matchlock butts, when he broke through the rabble. His horse had more

than one wound inflicted by knives or hog-spears, and was bleeding freely.

This might prove a source of serious inconvenience and of danger too, for if the animal sank under its wounds, how was he to convey Lena; and then the odour of the blood, as it dropped upon the grass and leaves, might bring wild animals on their trail.

Harrower made his way through the forest not very successfully, however, as some time elapsed before his eye recognised certain trees and bushes with which he was familiar. Then he saw the ruins on the little knoll, and the dark outline of the two remaining arches; but there a fresh source of alarm awaited him.

Close by, almost within the arch or vault, where he had last seen Lena, waving her hand in adieu, there was a native—a lean but muscular little Hindoo, clad only in a turban, and dhottee of red cotton, crouching on his knees, and gazing intently inward, with his back turned to Harrower.

This man was principally in shadow, being half under the horseshoe-formed arch; but strong gleams of light were thrown on his red turban, the rings in his ears, and his brown, naked shoulders, as the sun-rays shot through the trees.

After his recent experiences of natives, and in his present mood of mind, Harrower, on beholding this alarming and most unwelcome sight, and dreading he knew not what—the very worst, at all events—covered the Hindoo with his cocked pistol, having the decided intention of shooting him dead; but he as suddenly changed his mind, and feeling satisfied that, unless others were lurking near, the man could not escape, he quitted his saddle and quietly ascended the knoll, yet not so softly but that he was heard and seen by the Hindoo, who seemed in no way disconcerted by his approach.

As Harrower drew nearer, without hesitation or concealment, the man made motions indicative of silence, by waving one hand, while he placed the other on his mouth.

"What the deuce does the fellow mean?" muttered Harrower, who became still more astonished when the Hindoo drew from his girdle a little wooden pipe, of the most humble construction, and adjusting his long lean fingers on the holes, placed it to his lips, and began to play a low and monotonous air.

Intensely bewildered and alarmed by all this, Harrower came close to him, and under the ruined archway saw a sight that would have drawn a shout of terror from him, but that the Hindoo grasped his arm, and whispered energetically the single word, "Chup!" (silence).

There lay Lena Weston, on the poor couch of grass and leaves he had formed for her, sound asleep, overpowered by the heat of the day and the exhaustion she had recently undergone; and coiled close

by her side, with its diabolical head erect, its eyes glaring like yellow topazes, and its crimson mouth open, over her very shoulder, was a snake—a snake about a yard and a half long!

"Chup, sahib!" said the Hindoo, in a whisper; "it a Braminee cobra—good snake! ver good—bite—kill—dead, in one, two, tree hour," he added, counting on his fingers.

A cold thrill of terror passed over Harrower, and he felt as if the hair of his head bristled up. His first thought was his pistol; but again the Hindoo stayed the motion by seizing his hand.

After playing a few more notes of the low, monotonous air—which, though Harrower knew it not, was mere professional quackery, or "business," as the man was by trade a snake-charmer—he suddenly and quickly—so quickly and adroitly that not even the reptile could elude him—grasped it just under the jaw with the forefinger and thumb of his right hand, clenched like a vice round its throat, and then, with a whoop of delight, he brought it forth.

Lena started with a half-stifled shriek, not knowing what she had escaped, and chiefly alarmed by finding a native so near, while Harrower, incapable of speech, could only grasp her hands caressingly to reassure her, while looking at the little Hindoo snake-charmer, who, taking a pair of pinchers from his pocket, while the snake writhed, hissed, and lashed about in his unyielding grasp, proceeded with the utmost coolness and deliberation to extract the poisonous fangs; and after he had rendered it perfectly innocuous, he coiled it away in the basket that was slung at his back, and did so with as much *sang froid* as a fisherman might with a remarkably fine eel.

As he put it in, another snake, which he had previously secured, thrust out his head, arching his neck with a swan-like grace, his hood spread out and his eyes flashing with fire and wickedness, till the adroit hand of the Hindoo forced him down, and closing the lid, left them to writhe and twist together.

Lena's eyes were dilated with astonishment at this scene, the details of which, for some time, she could in no way understand. The deep sleep she had just enjoyed—that total unconsciousness and oblivion, which form the greatest restorative of wasted strength—had refreshed her, yet she had been all unaware of the baleful breath that was mingling with her own.

The snake-charmer now proceeded to finish off his work, by another monotonous bar or two on his pipe; but suddenly Lena grew pale and sick, and almost sunk down when Harrower explained the nature of the peril from which she had been saved by the Hindoo, who now ran to the rivulet, filled his brass lotah with water, and—as his caste was so low, that he feared no contamination from its being touched by *her* lips—he made her drink from the vessel, saying—

"Eik, sahib—poor Feringhee mem sahib ver bad—sick—ill; drink from lotah—only water, but ver good. Nuddee flow to Jumna, Jumna flow to Holy Ganges—drink, mem sahib—get well, and dam Braminee cobra—no harm you now."

The truth was that the man was simply an itinerant serpent-charmer (ranking in India pretty much as a rat-catcher does in England), and when first seen by Lena, crawling among the jungle grass, he had been in search of snakes for the purposes of his trade, and had arrived just in time to free her from the only peril of the wilderness she had yet encountered, before she had been aware of her danger, for had she made the slightest motion, the Braminee cobra would certainly have bitten her to death.

The use of the pipe by the snake-charmers of India is all a pretence, and is solely done to deceive; nor did the Hindoo, while watching and intending to capture the serpent, resort to his musical instrument until he saw Harrower coming near, when he acted out the little scene, even at the risk of the sleeper's life, for every second was fraught with the terrible danger that might have ensued had she moved or wakened.

If ever a snake comes out of a hole or a basket, in apparent obedience to the sound of the charmer's pipe, it is always a tame, a trained and harmless one, placed therein by design. Harrower knew nothing of all this; he literally believed that the snake had been charmed in some fashion, and knew that the Hindoo had saved Lena at no small risk to himself, being at that moment quite unprovided with a hot iron to sear his flesh in case of being bitten.

In a burst of gratitude to the Hindoo, Jack nearly emptied the contents of his purse—two gold mohurs and a few rupees—into his hand; but seeing that the man's eyes were covetously fixed on the silver ornament of his belt-plate, which bore the number 32, the motto of the regiment, and a Saxon bugle-horn, he tore it off, and presented it to him. Lena also clasped one of her gold bracelets on his arm, after which he departed, with innumerable salaams; but as he retired through the forest, Harrower detected him taking many a furtive and backward glance at the ruins, as if noting their exact locality, and this excited alike his suspicion and dread.

"Ah, Lena," said he, pressing both her hands within his own, "such an escape we have had!"

"I, you mean, Harrower."

"I say *we*," he continued, "for if you had suffered——"

"There would soon have been an end of all my sorrow——"

"But what of mine—and what would have become of me, poor devil?"

"You are very good and kind, Jack—my poor friend; I never

saw you look pale or tremble before. What did you think when you saw that horrid reptile so close to me?"

"Think?" said he, looking tenderly into her clear and beautiful eyes, which were beaming with something of real pleasure at his return. "I don't know what I thought."

"What did you feel, then?"

"Feel, Lena—how can you ask me such questions?"

"I am sure I scarcely know, Jack, unless it be that the serpent's breath has bewildered me."

"Well, Lena, I felt as only those can feel who love as I do, and see the one they love in imminent and deadly peril!" said he, with a burst of uncontrollable emotion, which caused her eyes to fill with tears.

"I was in terror, Harrower, lest some evil had befallen you, the time of your absence was so much greater than we expected," she said, with a faltering voice.

"And you missed me?" he asked, tenderly.

"Whom have I now to miss but you—what friend in the world, Jack? You were delayed——"

"By Safiyah, who had come home from Delhi," replied Harrower, who, though smarting under the pain of many a bruise and blow, was nobly unwilling to add to her distress and alarm by telling of his recent narrow escape, and how he had been driven from the direct road by armed Hindoo peasantry.

"Safiyah—my dear old ayah—you saw her?"

"Yes—for nearly an hour."

"And what news had she?"

"None, Lena," said Harrower, sadly, "none of those we love so much. Of their fate or flight she is as ignorant as we ourselves are; she could only tell me that the rebels grow in strength and number every hour; that everywhere the telegraph wires had been destroyed, and that Nana Sahib is to be King of the Mahrattas, so other mutinies and revolts must have taken place, thus further precluding our slender chances of ultimate safety and escape. Would to Heaven we were nearer the Ganges, or some hundred miles lower down the provinces!"

After her tears had flowed in silence for some time, she said with a shudder—

"I shall be afraid to close my eyes, lest some other horrible reptile come near me again."

"You forget that while you sleep, I watch."

"True—true; I thank you, dear friend."

Jack sighed, and said—

"But we must now prepare to leave this, Lena."

"We may change for the worse—but why?"

"Now that a native, though apparently a friendly one, has discovered our lurking-place, we have no alternative but to seek another."

"Ah, true—we can trust implicitly none of these people."

"Through hate, or fear, or greed—or the mere lust of wanton cruelty—they are sure to betray us in the end, now; and I did not like the backward glances of that Hindoo, as he went off with his basket of snakes, taking notes apparently of the locality."

"Then it must be flight again, Harrower?"

"Yes—I would that we had the souls of Arabs, Lena."

"Why?"

"We should then learn naturally to love this wandering and vagabond life—for we are becoming veritable gipsies."

"Flight again," said she, musing; "but to where?"

"Wherever kind Heaven directs us—I cannot say at present—yet stay," he exclaimed, after a moment's thought; "I have it!"

"Have what, Harrower?" she asked, anxiously.

"A plan for our procedure—fool that I was not to think of it long before!"

"And this plan—oh, quick, Jack—what is it?"

"We are within less than fifty miles of Kurnaul, a military garrison, a postal and telegraph station. Let us travel towards it by night, concealing ourselves by day, and while keeping the canal of Ali Merdan as our guide, we cannot fail to reach it."

"Then we may learn something of papa—or Polly—or Kate, for many fled to Kurnaul from Delhi! To Heaven's protection, and your kind guidance, I commit myself, Harrower."

"And so this night, we shall set out for Kurnaul," said he, cheerfully.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A FAITHFUL OLD SOUBADAR.

HARROWER found a species of wild nettle, the leaf of which acted as a styptic for the wounds of the horse; and then remounting Lena, when the evening was a little further advanced, he set forth in search of the road to Kurnaul, steering their way through the wild and untrodden forest to the westward, in the hope of coming, ere long, upon the canal of Ali Merdan Khan, which goes sixty miles beyond the place of their destination, even into the valley of Kardeh-deen, once a fertile and populous district, but a wild and untrodden jungle now; and from the evening of their quitting the ruin in the forest, terror, toil, and continued flight from place to place, with many harassing and exciting incidents, followed each other with a rapidity almost bewildering, for almost everywhere those Europeans, who, like themselves, became unhappily isolated, were hunted like beasts of prey, till death by the sword, or by fever, put an end to their miseries.

They had barely left the ruin a quarter of a mile behind, when a crowd of armed natives, in their scanty dresses of scarlet or white cotton, could be seen by the gleams of moonlight that shot through the foliage, rushing towards it from two points, as if by a preconcerted plan.

Something like an oath escaped Harrower, who added—

"So you see that my suspicions have proved just, Lena?"

"That the snake charmer would have us betrayed to death if he could?"

"The scoundrel—yes! However, we have anticipated him; but by a few minutes only."

"Yet Heaven be blessed for its kind inspiration, that enabled us to do so, Jack!" exclaimed Lena, with fervour.

A faint cry then escaped her, as a bullet fired at random, whistled through the branches of the trees overhead.

"Matchlock men, too!" muttered Harrower, whose practised ear knew the report of the firearm; "so these are doubtless the rascals I have met before."

Struggling on through the old primeval forest, impeded sorely,

and at times compelled to halt altogether by the rank luxuriance of the undergrowth, by fallen trees, rocks, watercourses, and other obstructions, it was nearly midnight before Harrower, who was guiding his companion by her horse's bridle, began to have some hope of their ever getting out of the woody wilderness of Soonput.

The trees became thinner, or further apart, and the wood more open; the long and feathery jungle grass disappeared, and the flat landscape that stretched away towards Jheend was visible in all its greenness and fertility, by the clear and beautiful moonlight.

A perfect silence reigned everywhere, and Harrower still leading the horse, continued to press on, through fields of growing maize, in hope to strike upon the road by the canal of Ali Merdan Khan, for that alone could be their guide to Kurnaul.

To travel by night, and to seek concealment by day, was now their plan; and absorbed each in sad and anxious thoughts, they proceeded without conversing, and as the chill dewy hours of the early morning drew on, Lena trembled and shivered, though Jack's care had closely muffled her in the old artillery cloak.

A line of wooden pegs, that extended through the fields at equal distances apart, served to indicate the intended line of railway from Delhi, through Jheend; but all such operations were at an end now, and surveyors and engineers had betaken them to the rifle and revolver; but Harrower now knew that they must soon reach the famous canal, by his recollection of a map he had seen in the Flagstaff Tower.

Now fields of thick and high sugar-cane rose in front to baffle and bewilder, for no path could be found through them; and to add to the troubles of the fugitives, the moon was waning fast, and amid gathering clouds, too.

"Morning was at hand, for already the Indian falcon—the *garadu*—or bird of Vishnu, was uttering its strange note of "chree-chree!" as it flitted from spray to spray.

Loth to alarm his delicate companion, Harrower expressed neither doubt nor fear, but steadily proceeded north-westward, after finding a narrow but well-beaten path. The morning was gloomy, but a lurid and increasing streak of light beyond the tree-tops of the forest they had left, indicated that ere long, with all its suddenness and tropical rapidity, the sun of another day would be mounting skyward; and now the barking and howling of pariah dogs caused Harrower to feel greatly alarmed, lest they were drawing near a camp or other habitation; and his fears had scarcely been suggested, ere they were confirmed, by finding that the road was suddenly closed by an arched gate, on each side of which ran a long extent of stone wall, loopholed in many places for musketry.

In short, they were at the entrance of a Hindoo village,

one of those communities of the ryots or husbandmen, who very seldom live in an isolated farm like that of Khoda Bux, but who associate together in one place, surrounded by a wall for the protection of themselves and their cattle; and not unfrequently under the guns of a little citadel or fort, belonging to some wealthy aga or zemindar.

In each of those villages is a chief-man who is regarded alike as the mayor and father of the community, as the regulator of its affairs and the administrator of justice, his simple court being held under a large tree, which usually grows without the gate.

Harrower was now very much embarrassed indeed! He knew not which way to turn; to retire was nearly as perilous as to advance, for around, the country was everywhere open; day was breaking fast, already the village was astir; he could hear voices within the walls, and he feared their fate would soon be sealed!

Vague ideas of boldly seeking the chief-man of the village and demanding protection, occurred to him; but how many had sought, while none found succour at the hands of old Mohammed of Delhi and his cruel sons?

He was about to turn the horse's head and seek concealment, however temporary, among the fields, when the sound of voices in their rear was heard, and a noisy and laughing crowd could be seen approaching—too evidently by the gleam of their weapons, and the varied colour of their dresses, the same tumultuary rabble which had attacked him on the road, and had been tracking them through the forest—and such they eventually proved to be.

"In the village we *may* find protection, Lena, but here on the road we shall surely perish without aid or mercy."

He struck the gate vigorously with the butt-end of a pistol, summoning the durwan to open, and almost immediately it swung back, showing a picturesque vista of the little street of houses and gardens beyond. All the inhabitants were beginning their daily avocations. Already the village priest was repairing to the Temple and Tank to perform, as the sun rose, the Sandivanè or worship of Brahma the Supreme; and already the lively and active Hindoo labourers were issuing forth to go afield with spade and hoe, while the women with jars and ghurrahs clustered about the wells for water or were proceeding to the Tank to bathe, to decorate their long, black, wavy hair, and paint their eyelashes, before fanning the four-armed statue of the god in the temple, which had been built there, by a wealthy Brahmin, to testify his remorse for having once loved a Pariah girl; but now the shout and rumour of "*eik sahib logue!*" (a white gentleman) ran like wildfire up the street, and there quickly gathered a crowd round Harrower, before whose tall figure, stern eyes and bearded visage (for a formidable hirsute appendage now covered half his face) they all gave way, when he warned them back with a wave of his revolver-pistol.

He demanded firmly to be led before the head-man of the village; and felt black despair gathering in his heart, and his tongue cleaving to the roof of his month, when he was answered only by shonts and mockery, and by the brandishing of spades and hoes. For himself, he felt that he might die content, after he had expended his last shot among these people. Three lives at least, should answer for his own; but after he had perished, there was Lena.

He dared not trust himself to look at her!

The pressure and tumult were increasing, and he knew that a hostile rabble, enraged by disappointment, now on the highway, would ere long join their fury with those in the street of the village.

They coarsely mocked Lena in particular, using epithets in Oordoo, with which she, luckily, was utterly unacquainted. Then decayed melons, cocoa-nut shells, even stones, began to whistle about her; but the copper-colonred rabble fled back with howls of elvish spite and fear when Harrower levelled his pistol at them, for the natives had a wholesome dread of a revolver, which they generally conceived to be a species of magic pistol, that, without being reloaded, might be fired for ever. Yet he was loth to discharge one bullet, lest by doing so he might anticipate the dreaded consummation.

But now, when matters had almost reached their gloomiest crisis, a tall and fine-looking old Brahmin, with a heavy white moustache, features full of dignity, and clad in the usnal scanty dress of the conntry, but wearing a white solar-topee, stepped forward, interposing between the two fugitives and the people.

"Peace, all of you!" he cried, in Hindostanee, and with a lond and authoritative voice. "Is it not written in the books of our faith, that fire is the superior of the Brahmin; the Brahmin is the superior of all the tribes of India, even as the husband is the superior of the wife; and that the stranger within your gates is, for the time, lord and snperior of *all?*"

"I thank you, sir," said Harrower, "for this succour; from my heart I thank you, for the sake of this poor lady whom I have to protect, and in the name of the one God who created us all, Indian and European alike!"

"Sahib, from whence have you come?" asked the Brahmin, suddenly speaking in good English.

"From Delhi."

"Ah, there has been much wicked work there, as well as elsewhere. Woe and ruin will close again upon Shahjehanabad, as they have often done before! And to where were you proceeding?"

"To Kurnaul."

"You cannot know, sahib, that yesterday the native troops in Kurnaul revolted, slaughtering their officers as they sat at the

mess-table, and every European who failed to escape; and that even they are now upon the march for Delhi, to join Mohammed Bahadoor Shah and his two sons."

"Even now on the march, say you?"

"Yes; and every hour we expect them here!"

"Oh, Lena!" exclaimed Harrower; "Fate has overtaken us at last!"

"Take courage, Jack! all may not be over with us yet; and perhaps this good man may assist us—he looks kind," she added, while her tears fell fast.

"You are a plucky girl, Lena, and have borne up bravely—nobly—but——" Harrower paused, and the expression of terrible anxiety which appeared in his face moved the old Brahmin with genuine compassion, and while his dark and glittering eyes filled with tears, he spoke again.

"Fear not, sir," said he, drawing himself up to his full height, and giving Harrower a very orthodox military salute, "for I am both able and willing to protect you."

"You have belonged to the Honourable Company's Service?" exclaimed Harrower, eagerly.

"Yes, sir, for five-and-forty years. See," he added, opening the collar of his dress, and revealing the two rows of gold beads—the honoured and valued badge of his rank as a native officer. "I am Bhowance Lall, soubadar-major of the 15th Native Infantry, Doo-ka-Pultan. When I led the regiment to the assault of Bhurtpore, after nearly all our European officers had fallen, killed or wounded, I could not foresee the events of this disastrous time. I have fought in all the great battles of the Company—yes, sahib," continued the old Brahmin, with growing pride and grief, "in Afghanistan, at Ghuznee, Ferozeshah, Sobraon, and everywhere else; and have eaten its salt with gratitude; but would to Brahma that I had been shot in battle under the colours of the 15th, rather than have lived to be degraded as I am to-day; but it was my *kismet*—my destiny!"

"Degraded—by a court-martial?"

"No, sahib," replied the Brahmin, proudly and bitterly; "I have sat on many a court-martial, but never was *before* one!"

"But you said degraded."

"Yes; only a short time since, my regiment—my old beloved Doo-ka-Pultan—mutinied at Nusserabad (a station far distant from this, in a wild and bleak country), when they heard of the massacre of the white people at Meerut. By my own exertions and influence I saved all the officers, who were permitted to go free with their lives and swords; then the whole corps, with the 30th, Macdoon-ka-Pultan, seized the field-pieces, plundered the bungalows, burned the pretty cantonments, and though thrice charged by the 1st Bombay Lancers, set off for Delhi, taking me with them, threatening to blow me from the mouth of a gun if I

refused. For a time I dissembled, and marched at their head, but being resolved to remain true to my salt, I deserted from them in the night; and after five-and-forty years of faithful service, and being six times wounded in action, I am now a very pariah, a beggar on the bounty of my kindred—I who was soubadar-major of our once glorious 15th Native Infantry!"

The old man wept, and seemed bowed down by grief as he spoke. The service, the pride, the glory, and the sustenance of his life had all passed away from him at once.

"If I ever survive to reach Calcutta, on my honour as an officer, your claims shall be remembered," said Harrower. "Take courage, soubadar."

"Then you will protect us, good sir?" implored Lena, gathering hope from this interview.

"He has already promised us that he will do so, Lena," said Harrower, looking anxiously at the crowd; "he told us that he was both able and willing."

"My brother Kunoujee Lall is the zemindar of the village and of all the adjacent district, and he will protect you, sahib, and the lady—your wife—for my sake, if not for your own," said the old soubadar, with another military salute; and then giving a stern glance at the crowd, which fell back, just as a multitude of men (on whose weapons of various kinds—tulwars, matchlocks, sabres, and hogspears—the morning sun shone brightly) came tumultuously into the village, through the arched gate at the lower end of the street.

"This way, sahib—we have little time to lose," said the Soubadar Bhowanee Lall, leading them towards a strongly fortified gate in an archway, over which two brass cannon were peering.

It was opened; they passed through, and when it was shut Harrower and his companion found themselves within the outer barrier or precincts of the house of the zemindar, a fortified dwelling mounted with cannon and mortars, and begirt by two strong walls, a palisade, and ditch.

"While here, sahib, you are safe, and the lady too," said the Brahmin, with a smile.

Harrower gave Lena a glance that expressed how full his heart was of gratitude, and she could only bow her head sadly, as she muttered a few words of prayer, for the gate had barely been closed and secured by a massive transverse bar, when yells and disorderly cries of rage and disappointment were heard without, as the mob, like a human surge, came dashing themselves against it.

Harrower looked round with uneasiness; but the old soubadar-major pointed, with a grim smile, to the two brass nine-pounders on the platform beside the gate, and once more gave his grave

military salute, as he led them up the eminence on which the mansion stood.

"Fear not, sahib," said he; "Kunoujee Lall will protect you, for the sake of those whose salt his brother has eaten for five-and-forty years."

The residence of Kunoujee Lall was a handsome Anglo-Indian villa, which had probably been built by some commandant or collector, after the battle of Assaye. It stood, as stated, within the quadruple defences of ditch, stockade, and two walls, which, from their solidity and antiquity, must have formed the outer ballium of the castle of some native prince or chief in the old fighting times of India, when dynasties and revolutions succeeded each other with such frightful rapidity, and when Hindoo, Patan, Mogul, Mahratta, the Sikh, and lastly the Briton, with the sword in one hand and a ledger in the other, ruled the land in turn.

CHAPTER XLIV.

IN THE HOUSE OF THE ZEMINDAR.

THE old soubadar-major knew well that every boy ensign fresh from Sandhurst, and every raw cadet just out from Addiscombe, had been wont to stigmatise the natives of India generally, and without exception—from the king of Delhi down to the lowest coolie, and from the purest Brahmin down to the veriest pariah whom the statutes of Menou ordained to be for ever a slave or outcast—under the unpleasant denomination of "niggers," with the usual English adjective prefixed, to ram the epithet home; but he also knew the value of a genuine British officer, and could appreciate the courage, the courtesy, and the education of a thorough English gentleman, for luckily in the service "snobs" are exceptional, and no army in the world can show a finer body of officers than our own.

Forty-five years' service in cities, cantonments, and barracks, had taught him, too, a proper sense of the high position and true character of a Christian woman—more than all, of an English lady, and Bhowanee Lall knew that the Queen upon the throne

could only be a lady too, and nothing more; thus he treated Lena with a respect and tenderness that went far to reassure her, and to cheer her drooping spirits.

"I have lived to see wondrous changes, madam," said he with another profound military salute, and a soft smile on his fine old face; "I am an Indian veteran, who can remember a very different state of things in the upper provinces, and when batta and tentage were really things worth counting on. In the days when I served under Lord Combermere, at the siege of Bhurtpore, we could not as now travel by carriage-dawk, by palkee-gharrie, or by the accommodation boats. It was all marching from station to station, for months, hundreds of miles up country, and pitching our tents, wherever the dewy night or the hot noon found us, every fifteen miles or so; and now when your great people are just introducing the railroad and electric telegraph, those sons of burnt fathers, the mutineers, have brought about the ruin of all things; but here is the mansion of my brother, Kunoujee Lall, and here he comes in person to welcome you."

They had been ascending the green scarped knoll on which the house stood, and now at the door, under the broad and shady verandah, which stood on rustic pillars covered with beautiful scarlet and blue creepers, there appeared a Brahmin, who, though he had not the stiff, erect, and military bearing of the soubadar, in form, face, and feature, even to the trim of the moustache, was his very counterpart.

"Salaam, Sahib—and to you, Mem Sahib," said he, making the usual gesture of respect with both his hands and bowing low.

"Salaam to you, Kunoujee Lall," said Harrower, whose uniform and attire generally presented now the most wretched appearance; "your brother, the most true and worthy soubadar-major of the 15th Native Infantry, has, in your name, promised us protection."

"And you shall have it, I promise you, on the faith of our fathers," he replied, but with difficulty, as his mouth was half full of betel leaf and chunam, a vile, but favourite "quid" of the Hindoos.

Just as Harrower lifted Lena from her saddle, and the wife and daughters of Kunoujee Lall conducted her kindly into the house, a dreadful tumult and fierce cries again rang at the outer gate, which was violently assailed by the blows of stones and weapons.

"This must be stopped," said the soubadar-major, in whose black eyes an angry light began to sparkle.

"Brother, you must speak to the people," said the zemindar, "for you are made of sterner stuff than I, Bhowanee."

"By the soul of Brahma, I shall make these two nine-pounders talk to them!" said the old soubadar; "turn out your people with their matchlocks, Kunoujee, and I shall soon clear the village at the point of the bayonet."

Harrower turned back with the soubadar, towards the gate, and through a loophoole could see outside the crowd from whose tender mercies he and his weary companion had so narrowly escaped.

They were the same variously armed peasantry who had assailed him on leaving the house of Khoda Bux, and who had tracked out their hiding-place in the forest; and to them were now added the villagers, who ominously brandished their agricultural implements. At the head of the whole, and making themselves remarkably active, were the serpent charmer and a strange figure in a loose blue, undress uniform, which was a world too wide for his lean and shrunken body.

"Ferukh Pandy—my rascally valet, by all that's wonderful," exclaimed Harrower, "and wearing some of my old uniform too."

He had on a pair of the gilt shoulder-scales, then worn by the line, and carried a double-barrelled rifle. At his neck hung a string of those rough brown berries, or beads, usually worn by dervishes, fakirs, and the peasantry.

In the dark faces of all these men, there was an expression of cruel and ferocious malignity, which filled Harrower's heart with rage and bitterness, for he felt how close—how terribly close—death had been to Lena and himself; and that, but for the most timely intervention of the friendly soubadar-major, a dreadful scene would have been enacted in that village street, and that they must both have perished miserably, as many others were perishing all over Bengal.

"Mar dalo Feringhees—mar dalo ghora logue!" (kill the Europeans—kill the white people), cried Ferukh Pandy, brandishing his rifle, which had been Jack's favourite weapon; "the king of Delhi will give us five hundred rupees for each of their heads."

In virtue of his close relationship to the mutineer Mungal Pandy, the Barrackpore assassin, this fellow seemed to enjoy a kind of authority over the others. Harrower levelled his pistol through a loophole, and would certainly have terminated the career of his enterprising valet, had not the soubadar arrested his hand.

"Save your powder, sahib, for I shall speak to them," said he; "and then, if they do not disperse in five minutes, I shall clear the street with those two nine-pounders, for we must get rid of them before the troops from Kurnaul come within sound of the firing."

This threat Bhowanee Lall (whose appearance was greeted by a yell, to which perfect silence succeeded) repeated to the rabble from the summit of the wall; then Ferukh Pandy, who seemed resolutely bent on mischief, resumed his cries of—

"Mar dalo Feringhees! strike now—one day is worth two to-morrows. Death to all the white Kaffirs!"

"You spoke of getting out your brother's people," said Harrower, who was becoming impatient.

"Yes, sahib; but——"

"But what—you cannot trust them?" he asked, with alarm.

"Nay, they are true as steel to us, and I shall certainly muster them."

"Do so, by all means," said Harrower, who was intently anxious to come within arm's length of Ferukh Pandy; "I should like to join them in charging that cowardly rabble, who would hunt to a merciless death two defenceless strangers, and one of them a woman—a delicate English girl!"

"But, sahib, if I bring out our people, who are only some twenty or so, yet all resolute men, I alone shall lead them forth."

"You, of course, soubadar-major, but with me by your side."

"I say nay again, for being the mark of every missile, bullet, and weapon, you would be certain to lose your life, and then what would become of the poor lady?"

"True—true," replied Harrower, biting his moustache with vexation.

"Run back those guns and load each with a bag of musket balls," said Bhowanee Lall, in Hindostanee, to some well-armed natives, who were the servants or retainers of his brother.

Slowly and laboriously, with ropes and lever bars, they rolled back the long-unused guns from the embrasures; they were evidently cannon as old as the days of Scindiah and Assaye, and unpleasant ideas of honeycombing and exploding occurred to Harrower, they looked so rusty and time-worn; but luckily there was no occasion to test their strength, for the hint their handling afforded was sufficient, and in less than a minute the street of the village was cleared from end to end. The soubadar-major laughed heartily as he saw the fugitives tumbling over each other in their mad terror to escape.

"At last they are gone!" said Harrower.

"I have still two great fears for you, sahib," said Bhowanee Lall; "one is, if the Kurnaul mutineers come here soon, for we could never withstand them; the other, that if news of your being in our keeping go to Delhi, Mirza Abubeker, general of the cavalry, who is unwearying in his energies for the destruction of your people, may send a force hither to demand you at my brother's hands."

Those surmises rather clouded the satisfaction which Harrower felt in the temporary safety afforded by the dwelling of the zemindar; and, as if to echo the very thoughts of Bhowanee Lall, the sound of drums came from a distance.

"Hark!" said he, changing colour, "the Kurnaul mutineers!"

They did not, however, come near the village, but passed it on

the Paniput road, and Harrower through a telescope could see their arms shining in the sun above the fields of yellowing grain, and the waving of their standards, which were their ordinary regimental colours—the Queen's and the Union Jack. Oddly enough, they did not relinquish these, as they deemed them consecrated and holy, having, as usual, on presentation, been marched into the sacred Ganges. Under their own native officers they were proceeding in excellent order along the highway, accompanied by a host of camp followers, women in covered waggons, and elephants laden with ammunition and spoil, *en route* for Delhi, the focus of the insurrection.

"There they go, and may the goddess of Destruction follow them!" said Bhowanee Lall, grinding his teeth; "from those fellows, at least, you are safe, sahib."

"Welcome!" exclaimed Kunoujee Lall, as they entered the drawing-room of the house, holding out his hands, which Harrower shook heartily; "I have to congratulate you on a double escape."

"But how is this, sahib?" asked Harrower, surprised by the extreme frankness of the Hindoo; "do you not lose caste by touching me?"

"Yes, for the time," replied the old Brahmin, half closing his eyes, with a smile that became a leer.

"Well, you do me a singular honour."

"Not at all, sahib; I shall purify myself."

"How?"

"Simply by prayer and bathing to-morrow."

"A small matter, certainly," said the soubadar-major, laughing, "as my brother and I bathe in the tank every morning, as regularly as the sun shines."

The cunning smile and the jesting tone of the zemindar when speaking of his caste impressed Harrower unpleasantly, for outwardly the elder Lall was a very devout man, and interlarded his conversation with many pious speeches and scraps of prayer: thus Jack feared that he was a hypocrite and not to be trusted.

Kunoujee Lall was one of the old zemindars, or lords of the soil, in Bengal, who held certain districts for which a stipulated sum was paid yearly to the Mogul sovereigns; and this system was not altered by the British Government, which, however, obliged these proprietors to give a bond that fixed their rents at a certain annual value, to prevent them from oppressing by arbitrary exactions the ryots, or humbler tillers of the land; but in consequence of being unable to fulfil their contract, many of their estates were seized and sold. Thus the majority of the old zemindaries had passed away for ever, while still that of Kunoujee Lall remained unchanged, and he lived secluded among his people in his fortified dwelling, a species of Hindoo gentleman of the old school.

His house was furnished with handsome European furniture,

English engravings, gilt French clocks, and elegant bijouterie, which suggested to Lena pleasant ideas of comfort and of home. On the first night of their residence with him, the whole house and its verandahs were lighted up with brilliant lamps and coloured paper or silk lanterns, and a supper was prepared for them specially, of such viands as it was supposed the Feringhees preferred, with a dessert of fruit, including the delicious mangoes of Mazagong, preserved in sugar, a rarity so famous, that in the days of Shah Jehan, he used to have mounted couriers stationed between Delhi and the Mahratta coast, to secure the first mangoes of the season.

When this repast was over, a young Hindoo played some intensely monotonous airs on the vina, a kind of mandolin of wires stretched on a board with a hollow gourd at each end, while another beat time on a tom-tom, or Indian drum, and a group of young girls, their black hair beautifully decorated with sprays of jasmine, and their lithe forms covered with jewels, having rings in their ears on their fingers and toes, and bracelets and anklets of gold filigree work, with bells of the same precious metal at their elbows and feet, performed a dance of wonderful grace and beauty, combined with the most perfect modesty; but Lena Weston, overcome by all she had undergone, and a dread of what she had yet to undergo, was past being roused or amused, so she looked sadly and wearily on, like one in a waking dream; while Jack, an inveterate smoker, felt soothed, almost happy, by a cigar, which Bhowanee Lall gave him, and which was almost the first "weed" he had enjoyed since that terrible day in the Flagstaff Tower, and the flight on the field-pieces for Meerut.

CHAPTER XLV.

NOUR MAHAL.

IT would appear, by what Harrower learned from the soubadar-major, Bhowanee Lall, that the ruin with the two quaint arches, which had afforded a shelter to Lena and himself in the forest of Soonput, was the remnant neither of a mosque nor a mansion; nor a relic of the Bheels, who have the credit of building all old ruins in India (just as the Picts have in Scotland), or of Jan ben Jan, who governed the world long before Adam came, a fact of which the Europeans are yet in ignorance; but it was the fragment of a once magnificent tomb, connected with the romantic story of one of the most beautiful and remarkable women who ever figured in the stirring and changing history of India—Nour Jehan, "the Light of the World," better known in many a song and tale of fiction by her softer and more loving name, Nour Mahal, "the Light of the Harem"—(the same sobriquet which, in vanity or jest, or in his pride of having a toy so new and beautiful, Mirza Abubeker had bestowed upon his poor little English captive, Polly Weston)—the same Nour Mahal whom Moore mentions in the poem of "Lalla Rookh."

It was a story which presented a strange example of the lack of parental affection—of covetousness and avarice justly punished, and of a life remarkable for its vicissitudes and splendour, its sorrows and joys.

Shortly before the Christian year 1600, when the Emperor Selim, on succeeding to the throne of Delhi, assumed the vain-glorious title of Jehanghir, or "Conqueror of the World," there came to the city, with a weary and dusty caravan of mules and camels, a Persian lord, named Ali Khan, who had once owned vast estates on the plains of Khoi, the most fertile district of Persia; but who, by his extravagances, had so wasted his wealth, that he had little more than a tomaun in his pocket when he and his only child, a little daughter, entered the splendid capital of the Moguls.

A rich merchant of the caravan, who traded in shawls of embroidered silk, China crapes, laventines and velvets, taking pity upon the impoverished lord, and being charmed by the beauty of his little daughter, procured for him a post in the palace of the

old Emperor Acbar. There the girl soon attracted the notice of the chief ladies of the zenana, by her marvellous beauty of face and form, by her powers of song, and the skill with which she could compose extempore verses; so they unanimously named her Nour Mahal—the Light of the Harem.

She did more than charm them; she completely fascinated the young Prince Selim, who, as a mere boy, inhabited as yet the zenana; but on this affection being discovered, old Acbar ordered her to be immediately removed.

Her father had risen high in the service of Acbar, but being again overwhelmed by debts on the one hand, and having been promised the vice-royalty of Bengal on the other, he made no scruple in complying, and would probably, had he been required to do so, have thrown the girl, without remorse, into the Jumna. He separated the little girl from her boy lover, and to raise money for his present exigencies, to repair his past extravagance, and that he might with all due honour and splendour take possession of his vice-royalty, he resolved to sell his daughter to the highest bidder, for some Persian zenana.

Just about the time he came to this barbarous conclusion, a caravan arrived in Delhi to purchase beautiful girls, as wives for certain great lords of Ispahan: so the avaricious Ali brought the slave-merchants to his house, which was in Chandney Choke, just opposite the caravanserai built by the Begum Saib, that they might see his daughter, Nour Mahal, and fix upon her price.

The Persian girl was in all the bloom of her early beauty; her hair glittered like gold or carded silk in the sunshine; her features had the most faultless delicacy and dove-like softness of expression, with a sadness over them that was very winning, for she found her father cold and heartless, and she pined for the handsome boy Selim, whom she had learned to love, and from whom she was so hopelessly separated.

The merchants, who by profession and experience were good judges of beauty, were charmed by her appearance, and they sought in vain for faults, or even the slightest blemish, and offered a princely sum to Ali Khan. This served but still further to excite his avarice, and he rose in his demands; so the merchants, who for this species of goods had *carte-blanche* from Shere Afgan, one of the richest men in Persia, doubled their offer, and then trebled it, so the father surrendered to them at last his lovely daughter, and the deed or document of transmission was duly signed and sealed, before the nearest kotwal, or magistrate.

Round her slender throat they clasped a necklace of those beautiful turquoises which are found in the mountains of Nishapour, in Khorassan, the Land of the Sun, and which are supposed to possess the magic power of bringing health and fortune to the wearer.

The huge bags of tomauns were handed to Ali Khan, and the

weeping child, for she was little more, was taken away. Unmoved by her tears, and deaf to her entreaties, avarice and vanity seemed to have sealed up the heart of Ali as in an impenetrable case. The caravan set forth at once, for the pockets of the merchants were empty, and Nour Mahal was deemed a sufficient prize; so Selim, from the walls of the zenana, saw it issue from the city, without knowing *who* was seated in the covered palanquin, surrounded by an armed escort. She was weeping unseen behind the close-drawn curtains, lonely, so sad in spirit, and already impaired in health, that the hitherto unparalleled turquoises were, by their alleged sympathy with the wearer, quite faded and pale in colour, to the great terror of her purchasers, who feared that if she died in their hands, and before being delivered to Shere Afgau, they would lose every tomaun!

"I have a wonderful talent for spending," thought Ali Khan, as he sat *à la turque* on a rich carpet, and propped against a pile of soft cushions, smoking a pipe six feet long, and contemplating his heap of treasure with singular complacency; even the mines of Golconda, where the diamonds lie scattered on the surface of the earth, would make little difference to me, for I should be sure to come to the end of them in time. When all this money is gone, I may miss the voice of my little Nour Mahal, and even sorrow for her, perhaps. Allah be praised for his mercies! but a daughter so good and so gifted is as good as a gold-mine to her poor old father.

But years elapsed before retributive sorrow or poverty came to Ali Khan. Mounted on a milk-white elephant, covered with trappings of gold and precious stones, and attended by a great body of Mohammedan and Mahratta warriors clad in shirts of shining mail, and all riding beautiful horses, he departed from Delhi (with four Nautch girls seated in his howdah to fan him), and feeling only that now, without shame of poverty, he might take possession of his vice-royalty, and freely boast of his descent from Rustam, the Hercules of Persian tradition.

But the treasure so won, brought only temporary happiness to the arid heart of Ali Khan; he was soon plunged in debt and difficulties, and, to support his extravagance, had committed various outrages and peculations, so that by the time the great Acbar died, and Selim ascended the throne of Delhi, the viceroy had won the disfavour of all.

"The prince had been married by his father's order, but as he had never forgotten the first love of his boyhood, the bright and happy girl of the zenana, and was allowed to have four wives if he pleased, he ordered Ali Khan, on peril of his head, "to lure Shere Afgan, to some solitary place, to the end that Nour Mahal might easily be carried off in his absence."

Unscrupulous still, and desperate in his money matters, Ali Khan sent a messenger to Shere Afgan, appointing to meet him

at a certain place in the forest of Soonput; but spies had already informed the luckless husband of the scheme that was on the tapis, and of the future honour that was inteuded for the slave-girl, whom he had purchased with so much treasure, and married.

At first he thought of putting his beloved Nour Mahal to death, rather than that auother should possess her; but he thrust aside the cruel idea, replaced his dagger quietly in its sheath, and rode forward to keep his appointment with the viceroy, who came attended by all his Mahratta guards, in their shirts of mail with shields and spears, and they made a glittering show, as they drew up at the trysting-place, the knoll overshadowed by a magnificent bauian tree.

"I have come unattended, as you see, Ali Khan," said his son-in-law, suspiciously, "while you have all your guards about you, Swear to me that you mean no treachery in all this!"

"I swear to you by the holy grave!" replied the unscrupulous Ali, who would have sworu by anything to serve himself.

Now to swear thus, by the tomb of the Shah Besade, at Casbin, is still one of the most sacred oaths of the Persians; but the Shere Afgan was not satisfied, his mind was full of doubt, and when he saw the Mahratta guards encircling the knoll on which the meeting took place, he drew his dagger and stabbed Ali Khan in the breast. Ali fell, with a wild cry of terror and agony, on which his guards at once cut Shere Afghan to pieces with their scymitars. Then, believing that the viceroy was also dead, they stripped the bodies of all their ornaments, jewels, and rich clothing, and left them to be devoured by the wild animals of the forest.

After this, a great Omrah of Delhi immediately succeeded to the vice-royalty of Bengal.

The death of Shere Afgan had been simply the result of his rashness, and not the contrivance of Selim, who instautly sent back the guards for the bodies, or what might remain of them. That of the Shere Afgan was found next day, uutouched by jackals, pariah dogs, or ravens, but of the body of Ali Khan, not a vestige remained!

So uow Nour Mahal became chief Sultana, Queen and Empress of Delhi, and no woman ever enjoyed so high au influence, or such a consideration at any Oriental court. More than ever did she excel in the art of making beautiful verses; and it is to her that the Indians ascribe the invention of attar of roses aud other sweet perfumes.

The gardens of Delhi were her delight, and there yet remain the white marble fountains, wherein she was wout daily to feed the gold and silver fish; but in the lovely Vale of Cashmere was always her favourite residence, away from the splendour and ponderous pageantry of state, and where, as the bard has it, she made the wilderness a heaven:—

"So felt the magnificent son of Acbar,
When from power and pomp and the trophies of war,
He flew to that valley, forgetting them all,
With the light of the harem, his young Nour Mahal."

The splendour of Selim's court was increased and refined by her taste. She introduced female dresses of a style much more graceful and becoming than any that had been in use before her time; and one of the first acts of her new career was to erect a magnificent tomb over the grave of her first husband, Shere Afgan, in the forest of Soonput.

The wonderful necklace of Khorassan had resumed all its pristine brilliance now, and the life of Nour Mahal glided on in perfect happiness. She was often a mother, and lived to toy with her grandchildren in the gardens of Delhi.

About the time when, to rescue Selim, she so narrowly escaped death in the great battle of Allahabad, when the elephant on which she was seated was made the centre of attack by the furious Rajpoots, who showered balls, rockets, and arrows till all her guards were destroyed; when the elephant, wounded to madness, sprang into the river, was carried down by the fierce current, and so narrowly escaped drowning; and when, shrieking with terror, she found her gilded howdah stained with the blood of a grandchild, that was nestling in her bosom till an arrow struck it—in that terrible time, we say, when she was on the verge of a miserable death, the ponderous animal was guided skilfully ashore by an old man, a pariah, a kindalah of the most wretched and squalid appearance, whom she ordered to be brought before her, that he might receive all the gratitude and reward a loving wife and mother could offer with her thanks and prayers.

The aged pariah bore all the marks of having endured the utmost famine and fatigue; he bore also the terrible badge of slavery, for, by the scar on his left ankle, he had evidently worn a fetter; yet withal, his appearance was venerable and not unpleasing.

"Oh, Mahmoud resoul Allah!" he exclaimed, with one of those noisy bursts of religious fervour that among Christians would be deemed a sign either of madness or hypocrisy, but which in the Oriental is often perfectly genuine; "though, as we are told, two angels are deputed to take account of a man's behaviour in life, one hovering unseen on his right hand, and the other on his left—one a watcher and the other to record—what hath it availed me? The agony of death shall come, and the trumpet shall sound! What hath it availed me that the angel who notes my good actions, hath command over him who notes my bad, and could say 'forbear setting them down for seven hours, lest peradventure he may repent and pray;' what avails it, when I never committed a good action, and have never prayed or repented

me of a bad one: so *all* are recorded against me! Oh, Nour Mahal, my daughter," he added, in piercing accents, "behold in me the end of a cursed ambition, and of grasping avarice. I am Ali Khan, your old and miserable father."

"My father! impossible—he was slain years ago, in the forest of Soonput."

"By the holy Caaba of Mecca, I am he! Behold in my breast the wound that was made by the dagger of Shere Afgan."

"But how were you saved?"

"A wandering fakir preserved my life by stanching the wound with the wild nettles of the forest; but better would it have been had he left me there to die. Now, light of my eyes and joy of my old heart, let me kneel and implore your forgiveness for all the past."

And the old pariah rent his beard, heaped dust upon his head, and wept.

Then the gentle Nour Mahal wept also and embraced him; and listened to his long story of wanderings and sufferings among the hill-tribes, the Bheels and the Rajpoots.

As a reward for all he had—it must be admitted, most deservedly—undergone "he was raised to the office of grand vizier, and was one of the best officers that ever ruled at the court of an Eastern prince," so suffering and slavery had taught him wisdom and frugality at last; but his term of office was short after the capture of Selim by Mohabat Khan; he died in extreme old age and was buried in the same tomb in the forest where Shere Afgan lay. An arch still covers the grave of each.

After the death of Selim, Nour Mahal abstained from all amusements, devoting herself entirely to his memory, and wearing no colour but white, the Indian mourning. When she died and was laid by his side at Lahore, it was perceived that her necklace of marvellous turquoises from Khorassan had lost all their colour and become nearly as white as pearls.

After this event, which occurred in 1646, the tomb in the forest fell gradually to ruin and decay; but such was the story which the old soubadar-major told Lena and Harrower of the place in which she had found concealment, and where she had so narrowly escaped the poisonous fangs of the Brahminee cobra.

CHAPTER XLVI.

TRACED AT LAST.

SORELY did Lena Weston require rest of body if she could not get peace of mind.

Even the beauty of the Indian village—and though its huts were dark, baked, weather-beaten and crazy in construction, it *was* beautiful—failed to interest her. It was secluded among the most glorious foliage and luxuriant verdure; there were topes of venerable mango trees, tall tamarinds, with light feathery sprays, plantains with their broad green leaves and golden-tinted fruit, and the giant banian, the developed growth of centuries—old perhaps as the days of Timour—throwing far and wide its hundred drooping arms, as if to shroud the Hindoo temple of Vishnu, whose walls were white as snowy chunam could make them; shrouding also the old Fakir who sat smoking on a mat under its grateful shadow; the sacred tank, where the brilliant cups and petals of the lotus floated, and where the dancing-girls of the temple laved their graceful limbs, before engaging in the strange prayers and sensual ceremonies of the shrine to which they were devoted; and there, too, was the pagod tree, with bronze idols placed under its branches, whereon the wild peacocks, the turtle-doves, and brilliant parrots were perching.

For all these beauties of Nature, circumstanced as he was, Jack Harrower cared quite as little as Lena, and would willingly have given all Hindostan for the bare scalp of Cornish Caddon-burrow.

Several weeks elapsed and they remained quietly and unmolested at the house of the Zemindar Kunoujee Lall; Harrower dared not venture beyond the precincts or outer walls, and he writhed under a system of such inactivity and restriction, feeling himself at times almost a prisoner of war.

As in the dwelling of Khoda Bux, he saw very little of Lena, and nothing of the females of the house; but he knew that they left nothing undone to cheer and sooth her, for the Hindoos are a lively and, when not inflamed by fanaticism, a gentle people, whose religion is to them a perpetual source of amusement, inculcating a love of India, "as the most beautiful of all lands, while all its charms—its streams, and trees, and fruits and flowers—are

associated with its mythology, and are the direct gifts of its millions of gods."

On ascertaining that his guests were not married, and were not even brother and sister, Kunoujee Lall was very much astonished, and this caused Lena sedulously to avoid Harrower as much as possible; but the old soubadar-major understood the amenities of European life better than his brother, whom, however, he totally failed to enlighten.

He knew Harrower's regiment well, and had served in brigade with it in the Punjaub under Lord Hardinge, at the storming of Moultan, and at Goojerat, honours now borne on its colours. He greatly enjoyed the society of Harrower, with whom he was never tired of conversing on military topics, and whom he literally bored by constantly "talking shop." The brave old man clung to the hope, that through the European captain, he might get his claims granted, his character cleared, and be reinstated in his rank as a native field-officer when the present troubles should have passed away; but this hope grew less daily, as tidings came of fresh revolts, and it seemed as if the British power in India was crumbling into dust, and was really—as a thousand prophets had foretold—to pass away with the hundredth year after Plassey.

They heard of mutinies at Ferozepore in the province of Agra, when most of the women and children were saved by the Queen's 61st Foot, at Lucknow; at Umballa in Rohilcund; at Cawnpore—that name of horror—and everywhere else. In the details of all these, there was a close resemblance; bridges and rails torn up, telegraphs destroyed, magazines sprung, boats sunk in the great rivers, the white officers and civilians slaughtered in cold blood, with their wives and families; but nowhere were such outrages committed as at Meerut and Delhi, save at Cawnpore by the infamous Nana Sahib and his compatriot Azimoolah Khan, both of whom indulged in the wildest lust of blood, and in cruelties alike puerile and revolting; and then they thanked the gods of the Hindoos for the terrible power thus accorded to them, over the unbelieving English.

Such was the pleasant and merry month of May in India; and invariably after insurging, the mutineers, horse, foot and artillery, marched on for Delhi, proclaiming everywhere the downfall of the "Koompanie raj," and the supremacy of the Mogul dynasty.

The dervish Hafiz Falladeen preached in the great mosque, and from the back of a royal elephant in the market-place, prophesying with all the fervour of a Mohammedan "Mucklewrath," that the three thousand angels, who were led by the Archangel Gabriel, to the assistance of the prophet at the battle of the Bedr, were again coming through the air to assist Mohammed of Delhi.

Though he concealed from Lena Weston much of what he heard, these tidings of outrage and disaster filled Harrower with

emotions of rage—even of despair—difficult to describe; rage that he was separated to all appearance so hopelessly from his regiment, and from assisting in the task of reconquest and revenge—and a despair for the ultimate safety of Lena in a vast country like India, where the entire native population seemed to be in revolt against us.

The story of the greased cartridges was forgotten now; it was a war of races, of religion, and extermination.

It soon became unpleasantly evident that the Hindoo zemindar, Kunoujee Lall, was beginning to be forcibly impressed by the formidable aspect of power and stability given to the old King of Delhi; and that he feared he had been somewhat rash in so readily according protection to the two Feringhees; thus, after a time his manner became marked by a singular coldness and a decided bearing of reserve, that gave Harrower, who was proud and sensitive, the utmost annoyance and the keenest anxiety, especially when he recalled the *first* impressions of his character; and this made him whisper to Lena one evening in his homely way,—

"By Jove, I am certain that we are outstaying our welcome here, and that we must shift our camp elsewhere, Lena."

That very night the inmates of the zemindar's dwelling were roused by the deep growling and barking of their watchdog, a large Thibet mastiff, and by the sound of a cavalry trumpet, the prolonged notes of which rang loudly at the arched gate in the outer wall that faced the double row of huts forming the street of the village. Harrower had not retired to his charpoy (native bed) so he seized his sword and pistols fully believing that some crisis was at hand, and he met the soubadar major similarly armed hurrying forth with his brother the zemindar, who was in such a pitiable state of trepidation and alarm that every fold of his loose white garments was quivering and shaking.

The moon was shining with a clear blue kind of brilliance, purer than sublimated silver, that rendered every object as distinct as if it was under the daylight of noon, and on looking from the wall above the gate, they saw three mounted Light Dragoons, clad in the silver grey uniform worn by all the cavalry of the East India Company's service, accompanied by the half-naked Fakir Gunga Rai, who was mounted on a lean little Afghan pony, accoutred with a rope bridle and a piece of folded matting as a saddle.

"Who are you?" demanded the soubadar-major, in a tone of authority.

"A naick of the 3rd Light Cavalry," replied one, who had a pair of chevrons on each arm.

"And what do you want—quarters for the night?"

"No, sahib."

"What then—people don't blow trumpets in this fashion for nothing."

"I have been sent hither with two sowars, as you see, by order of Shumshoodeen Khan, Rissaldar of Horse, to demand the surrender of two of the Ghora-logue, now in your keeping."

"We shall not surrender them either to you or the Rissaldar," replied Bhowanee Lall, drawing a pistol from his belt.

"You must yield them in the name of the King of Delhi, Mohamed Bahadoor Shah," cried the Fakir in his shrill voice.

"We shall yield them to none, while a stone of this house stands upon another—speak to them, brother, you are the elder, and command here," said the soubadar-major.

But the face of the zemindar was deadly pale; the bead drops glittered on his temple like pearls in the moonlight, and he trembled with fear more violently than ever.

"We have sheltered those you seek," resumed the old native officer, sternly; "they have eaten of our bread and salt, so with us their persons are sacred. Begone to Shumshoodeen Khan, or whoever sent you, and say so. Right about face, and away, or you will be fired on!"

"Your heads shall answer for this!" cried the Fakir, in a voice that mounted to a scream.

"Remember that my brother, the zemindar, is not to blame, but I alone—I, Bhowanee Lall, soubadar-major of the 15th Bengal Infantry, Doo-ka-Pultan; tell all so within the gates of Delhi."

"I do but obey my orders," replied the naick (*i.e.*, the corporal), "and others will come to enforce them."

"Woe to you," cried the Fakir again, lifting his hands above his head; "you shall all be blown from a mortar for this treason."

"How many armed men are in Delhi now?" asked Bhowanee Lall.

"More than fifty thousand, horse and foot."

Harrower thought, at the time, that this was simply oriental exaggeration.

"You still refuse?" said the naick, shortening his reins, and wheeling round his horse.

"Absolutely."

"Such evasion is quite useless," replied the naick, whose breast was covered with silver medals; "by noon to-morrow a sufficient force will arrive, and blow your whole house to pieces."

Again the lean, squalid, and wild-looking Fakir shook his clenched hand menacingly, and the party turned their horses and galloped through the village. As the sound of the hoofs died away on the Delhi road,

"Brother—Bhowanee Lall," exclaimed the zemindar in a tone of great bitterness, "you have destroyed me. Of our dwelling,

by this time to-morrow, nothing shall remain but the blackness of ashes!"

And muffling his face in the skirt of his long flowing dress, as if to stifle his grief, he hurried away to that part of his house which was allotted to the females of his family, and the numerous olive-branches of the house of Lall. The soubadar followed him, and Harrower was left alone for some time, with thoughts more easy to conceive than describe.

For himself he had neither anxiety nor fears; all that agitated him were for Lena—Lena, whom he loved with a passionate and all absorbing love; an emotion all the more tender now, because of her helplessness, and that he was her sole protector.

How little could he conceive that the source of this message from Delhi might, by a strange course of events, be traced to Polly Weston!

CHAPTER XLVII.

FLIGHT RESUMED.

IN India there is much to puzzle the clearest-headed and strongest-minded European; the strange and ancient habits and ideas that have continued unchanged for thousands of years; the childish and yet terrible customs of life and of religion; the force of caste, and the stern, unflinching superstitions of Hindoo, Gueber, Khond, Bheel, and Mohammedan—superstitions which have come down through uncounted generations of men, with as much certainty as their colour, race, and manners; and then, the latter are so peculiar too, for in India all European notions of everything are completely *reversed!*

Reflecting on these things, Harrower was still lingering in the moonlight under the verandah, irresolute what to do, afraid even to propose that he and Miss Weston should leave the residence, and once more commit themselves to the high-ways and bye-ways, lest they might be detained by the timid zemindar (as hostages to save himself from the new authorities in Delhi), when his troubled reverie was interrupted by the return of the souba-

dar-major, whose fine dark face wore an unusually stern and gloomy expression.

"My brother is greatly disturbed," said he, "and upbraids me most bitterly as being, perhaps, the means of his ultimate ruin."

"I understand you—by giving us shelter here."

"Yes, sahib; but what could I do? I could not have stood idly by, and left you both to perish at the hands of those rascally budmashes outside the gate."

"I regret all this inteusely," replied Harrower.

"I have pacified my brother, however," said Bhowance Lall, —"for to-night, at least."

"The poor man seems greatly disturbed—so how did you achieve this?"

"By agreeing that you and the lady should ultimately be surrendered to any force that may come hither to demand you on the morrow."

"Soubadar!" exclaimed Harrower, in whose eyes a fierce flash glittered, as he thought of all the dissimulation of which the Indian nature is supposed to be capable.

But the native officer laughed.

"Ere the naick," said he, "can make his report to that worthy the ex-Thug, his colonel, and long ere other messengers can come, I shall take care that you and the lady too will be far away from this. I shall also have to fly, and so may easily take the blame of all—your shelter and escape; though I would rather yield myself up, than have my brother, poor Kunoujee, suffer."

"I cannot sufficiently thank you for all this; but I dare say you are aware that I feel more for the lady I have to protect than for myself, and I tremble at the contemplation of all she may have yet to undergo."

"My presence with you both may alleviate much of that."

"Your Hindoo women are modest and bashful, soubadar; so are our English girls: but to one having a sensitive organisation and being delicately alive to all the proprieties and refinements of our species of civilisation, this career of anxiety and privation is —for Miss Weston—terrible!"

"I shall cast my lot with you and her, sahib; for if taken here I should simply be shot—perhaps blown from the mouth of a gun by my own men of the 15th now in Delhi, as a deserter from them and the cause of religion." Looking at his watch, he added, "It wants only some five hours of daybreak, yet much may be done in that time; I am an old soldier and used to expedients. If the lady has not retired, prepare her at once for an immediate start, without acquainting the wife of Kunoujee Lall or any of his female domestics. I shall have three saddled horses at the outer gate precisely at midnight."

"You can actually arrange all this?"

"And more, perhaps, if necessary; for there are people here on whom I can depend better even than on my timid brother."

The alarm caused by the sound of the trumpet and the violent barking of the dog, had luckily prevented Lena from retiring as usual, and she was lingering restlessly and feverishly in the drawing-room, where all the oil-shades were extinguished but one, awaiting the appearance of Harrower.

"It was a false alarm, Lena," said he, loth to inflict any unnecessary terror on her; "but a great change has come over that old muff of a zemindar——"

"A change!"

"Have you observed for some time past that he has been as cross as two sticks, and evidently wishing us anywhere else than here?"

"I have thought his manner less cordial to us certainly."

"Yes, so the soubadar says—a jolly old fellow is that soubadar—that we must be off to-night, and at once, as quietly and secretly as possible—without beat of drum, as we say in barracks; otherwise we *might* be surrendered to the King of Delhi, which would be decidedly unpleasant."

Jauntily though Harrower spoke, there was a palpable anxiety in his manner. She came close to him when she replied, and saw that his features were pale, and pale too looked her own, in the flickering light of the sconce or oil-shade, while her dark eyes were dilated, yet weary in expression; and now her whole aspect, with the thoughts of the misty future, wrung the loving heart of Jack Harrower.

"You have not quite told *all*, as I can see by your honest, agitated face, which belies your assumed lightness of manner; but, oh! where will all this end?"

"God alone knows," said he gravely, as he gently took both her hands in his, and felt savage at the old zemindar; yet what could the poor man have done?

Lena sighed deeply. She allowed her hands to rest in his for a longer period than she ever did before; and though they were almost as familiar as brother and sister now—a familiarity resulting from the peril and peculiarity of their isolated situation—the touch of her soft hands quickened Harrower's pulses, and sent a thrill of pleasure to his heart; but she seemed to remember herself, and suddenly withdrew from his loving clasp, saying, with sad earnestness—

"We must put our trust in Heaven, and so begin once more our weary pilgrimage, Captain Harrower."

"*Captain* Harrower?" he echoed, reproachfully.

"You don't think you have lost your commission, do you?"

"No, Lena; but I dislike being called so by you——"

"Why?"

"Simply because—because——"

"Why?" she asked again, with a faint smile, for Jack's cheek almost reddened.

"Your hands lingered a moment in mine, and you were ashamed of the emotion of your heart—a passing emotion of kindness to me—poor devil!"

"Oh! Jack, forgive me—my position is a painful, a most peculiar one; and—oh! don't recur to the past—*now*, at least."

"Deuced hard lines!" thought Jack, who had almost begun to forget Mark Rudkin; "but here comes the soubadar-major."

Bhowanee Lall appeared, with some garments over his left arm.

"We must disguise ourselves, sahib," said he. "It will greatly facilitate our concealment and ultimate escape."

"But my skin will betray me."

"Not after I have artistically tinted it for you," replied the other, as he produced a little sponge, which he dipped in a China saucer, containing a coarse brown dye made from the fruit of the uckroot tree, and, after a few applications of this, Harrower's face, neck, and ears, were rendered a light copper colour, a transformation which excited some astonishment, but no amusement, in poor Lena.

"Now, sahib, quick with this disguise."

Harrower's uniform was literally hanging about him in tatters and shreds, so he was not sorry to don a long and loose-sleeved camise, or blouse, of thick light-blue cotton, which reached below the knee, and in make or fashion closely resembled the coarse linen frock of an English peasant. A species of skull-cap was then given him of scarlet cloth, with a broad edging of black fur, and a pair of long, lacing boots of light-brown leather, which completed the costume.

The soubadar-major, who had already attired himself in a similar fashion, said, with an air of satisfaction—

"Now, sahib, wherever we go we shall pass ourselves off as Afghans bound on a pilgrimage, or something of that kind. These are some of the things I brought home with me when I served under Brigadier Pollock, in Afghanistan.

"But how about the lady?"

"I have provided for her too."

"How shall we ever thank you—ever repay you, for all this forethought and kindness!"

"A time will come, I hope, when you may amply do both, Captain. The rich man when he is fighting takes care of his face, and the poor one of his coat. I had only my uniform to boast of, and that is gone now; but I hope, through you, to have it restored to me. Veiled as an Afghan woman, none will molest her unless, indeed—which Brahma forbid!—we fall among Dacoits, or some such rascals."

He gave to Lena a camise, such as are used by the Afghan women; more ample than that worn by Harrower, it was something of the same fashion, and loose as a domino. It was of very fine stuff, highly painted, and brocaded with silk. She had also a cap of scarlet silk, covering all her forehead and ears, and over this the soubadar placed one of those thick veils, which the Afghan women always draw on the approach of a stranger.

Under their long loose dresses Harrower and Bhowanee Lall placed their swords and carefully-loaded pistols.

"A lady being with us will excite no surprise," said the latter, "as it is well known that the Afghans—though jealous fellows enough—do not, like other Mohammedan races, universally shut up their women, but allow them to go abroad, and that they travel more frequently on horseback than in covered waggons or palanquins. But as the Afghans are Sunis—most orthodox Mussulmans, hating the Persians as followers of Ali—they shave the middle of the head, so we must be careful never to remove our caps. Time has shaved mine close enough, sahib, but you——"

"Trust me, good soubadar—I shall be careful," replied Harrower, who felt the uckroot juice, as it dried on his face, anything but a pleasant application.

Extinguishing the oil-shade, by the light of which this masquerading had been completed, Bhowanee Lall led the way, through the open window, out into the verandah, and down the grassy knoll, unseen by all the household, who were probably buried in sleep—all save the zemindar, who, of course, had no idea of what his troublesome guests were doing, and was too probably full of grief and alarm for the events of to-morrow.

The moon was still clear and bright, and a man in whom the soubadar-major placed implicit trust, awaited them at the outer gate with three horses, one of which bore the old side pad given by Khoda Bux.

"I only borrow one horse from my brother," said the soubadar, twisting up his old grey moustache; "this is my old nag that I rode in the 15th, and that is your old artilleryman."

But now when on the very verge of their escape, all was nearly frustrated by the watch-dog; for just as they approached the barrier, the enormous Thibet mastiff—an animal of considerable strength and ferocity, with a long nose, short ears, and pendulous cheeks—growled hoarsely, and was about to utter its angry, roaring bark, which would infallibly have roused Kunoujee Lall and all his people, when fortunately Bhowanee soothed it by a word or two, on which it snorted a kind of recognition or approval, and coiled itself up to rest again.

Another minute saw them free and mounted outside the walls. The huts of the village were all dark, not a spark of light was visible anywhere, save from a little domed edifice, which was a hospital for old and frail monkeys, erected by some devout person,

and to these animals food and money were constantly brought by pilgrims.

"Which way, soubadar?" asked Harrower, who Lena thought looked very handsome with his skin darkened, for his features were fine and regular, his teeth white as pearls, and in addition to his thick black moustache, he had now a beard that any Kuzzilbash of Dost Mohamed might have envied in its amplitude.

"I hope we may strike upon the Ganges, somewhere about or below Jehangerabad, fifty coses* from this. There we may get on board a budgerow, and drop down the river to some station held by Europeans. At present I can see no other plan."

"And a very good one it is," said Harrower, approvingly, as they turned their horses' heads eastward; "Jehangerabad be it."

"Jehangerabad, indeed!" muttered a man, whose crouching figure, as he lay close to the outer wall of the fort, had been concealed by the strong, black depth of shadow, and a hideous figure it was, almost nude, hairy as a gorilla, with tangled elflocks overhanging his wild eyes, that seemed to be always glaring evil; many more than you, false Kaffirs, will be on the way there to-morrow," and he shook his clenched hand as he spoke; "Feringhees disguised as Afghans—as Sunis—ho! ho!"

It was the Fakir Gunga Rai who had remained behind to watch, in his rancorous blood-thirstiness and fanaticism, while the naick and his file of troopers returned to Delhi, for which place this reverend personage departed at once, with all the speed he could force his old Afghan pony to exert.

* About one hundred miles British.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE BROKEN BRIDGE.

THE aqueduct of Ali Merdan Khan and the trunk road to Kurnaul were soon crossed, and as Bhowanee Lall knew the country well thereabout, he proposed to seek a bye path that led to a pontoon bridge over the Jumna near Bhagput.

About dawn they crossed the stream, and as the heat of the morning grew apace, took shelter in a forest, where there was such a crowing of cocks and clucking of hens, that, as Jack said, "One might have thought all the barnyards of Britain were there," for in India all our domestic fowls are to be found wild.

After a time this subsided, and nothing was heard in the solitude but the chattering of monkeys and the voice of the nightingale as it sung (though in the day-time) from a pomegranate-tree. The horses were stabled under the branches and unbitted for a feed of corn, which the thoughtful soubadar had provided in a bag attached to his saddle bow.

The exercise of the early morning ride, with perhaps a flush of hope, had given a slight tinge of colour to Lena's damask cheek, adding to the delicate beauty of her clearly-formed features and to the light of her soft dark eyes. She smoothed her silky brown hair, and giving a faint smile at the picturesque but odd figure of Harrower, who was regarding her with tender solicitude, she said—

"I shall sleep a little if I can, Jack, I am so weary."

"Do, Lena, if you may achieve it, for we have a long ride before us to-night."

"If I ever survive these strange passages of life—which I greatly doubt"—said she, "I shall have them often in my dreams at night for years to come."

Ere long she was fast asleep with the Afghan veil drawn over her face, and thus she escaped the alarm caused to her two companions by the sudden appearance of three horsemen, well armed and mounted, evidently a young gentleman of Oude, and his two attendants, who had sought the protection of the forest from the noonday heat, and were now passing forth towards the highways. They reined up their horses and observed the little bivouac with

inquiring eyes. They had all large white turbans; the two attendants had shields slung on their backs, and were armed with long lances having scarlet tassels under the pike head. They rode without boots, and with their bare feet in the stirrups, but their leader was richly clothed and had long leggings of fine brown leather stamped with gold.

Harrower felt irritable and uneasy under his scrutiny, and trembled in his heart lest Lena should awake or lift her veil, and show that she was one of the *Ghora Logue* and beautiful.

"What are you, sahibs?" inquired the leader.

"Afghans," replied the soubadar-major, curtly.

"Afghans—here!" exclaimed the other, with increasing surprise.

"Yes, sahib; what is there peculiar in our being so?"

"You do not speak like those I have met at Cabul."

"Very likely, for we are Khyberees."

"Whither are you going—if to Delhi, to take service under Mohammed Shah and the princes? Come with me—I am Nour-ad-deen Abraha al Ashram."

"But we are *not* going to Delhi."

"Where then?" persisted this inquisitive personage, who was very elaborately armed, with sabre, poniard, and a double brace of pistols.

"We go to Meerut—on a pilgrimage."

"To the tomb of Abu?"

"Exactly, sahib—to the tomb of Abu."

"Good—the shadow of the prophet be over you," said the gentleman of Oude, as he and his two followers rode off, not, however, without repeatedly looking back, with an air of suspicion.

"Perdition follow him, for the lies he has made me tell! But we must to horse, sahib," said the soubadar, tugging at his grey moustache, the moment the three strangers disappeared; "that man has some doubts of us, else he had never dared to question me so closely. He goes to Delhi, and if he should meet the party we are endeavouring to elude, he may give them a clue where to find us."

Lena was roused from her temporary, but happy oblivion; the horses were bitted, and though the heat of noon was not yet past, they once more took to the road at a rapid trot; they galloped right through the little town of Bhagput, and pushed on for Jelalabad, which lies fourteen miles south-eastward of it.

There the country was open; rich fields of maize and corn were interspersed with greeu and beautiful clumps of mangoes, and other fruit trees, and here and there grew the superb date-palm, "whose head," as an Oriental poet has it, "reclines languidly like that of a handsomc woman, overcome with sleep." These groves, and all the far stretching landscape, seemed to be

vibrating and quivering in the hot, bright rays of the unclouded sun, as the travellers rode on at a quick pace, and in silence, for more than ten miles, till an angry interjection escaped the lips of the soubadar-major; he reined up his horse, and twisted his moustache about—a custom he had, when provoked or in doubt.

His practised eye had detected something else than the trees and fields quivering in the sunbeams—the glitter of military accoutrements at some miles distance.

"Cavalry," he exclaimed; "and on the march!"

"Can you make them out at this distance?" asked Harrower; "I can only see something sparkling in the sun, about three miles off—it may be the windows of a house—or a brass dome."

"The windows, and the dome too, would both stand still, sahib; but that 'something' which you see is the glittering of accoutrements. When Infantry are on the march towards you, the reflection of the sunshine from their arms is steady, and never wavers as yonder glitter does, by the double motion of the man and horse when riding."

With growing anxiety, they continued to watch these objects.

The glittering rapidly increased, and ere long the dark figures of the horses and their riders could be distinctly seen, as they traversed the open country, pursuing the broad trunk road that leads from Delhi, through Meerut.

"They are coming straight this way," said Lena, with growing agitation.

"Yet they cannot be after us," suggested Harrower, "for if so, they would seek us on the western, and not the eastern side of the city."

He little knew how accurate was the knowledge of their movements, possessed by Baboo Bulli Sing and others.

"Shall we wheel about and avoid them, or pass on and trust to our disguises?" he asked

"We can trust to nothing but our horses' heels!" said Bhowanee Lall, emphatically.

"Why?"

"They are so close now that I can make them out distinctly."

"The strong sunshine dazzles my sight," said Harrower, shading his eyes with his right hand.

"But not mine, sahib; there are twelve sowars of the 3rd Cavalry, and a stranger, mounted on a small horse—Gunga Rai, the fakir—it is he, by the soul of Brahma!"

The three now turned their horses' heads, and rode off towards the more wooded portion of the country—the place they had just quitted. On perceiving this a faint cry came floating over the fields on the light breeze, and it was evident that they had been seen, and the flight and pursuit had begun!

The troopers urged their horses to a gallop, and the glittering among them increased greatly, for now they had all drawn their swords. In short, it was a sergeant's party, sent out to intercept them on the road to Jehangerabad, in accordance with the information given by Gunga Rai.

"Who could have anticipated that already our disguises would avail us so little!" said Lena, in a piteous tone.

It was fortunate for Miss Weston that she was a practised and well-trained horsewoman, yet the clumsy action of the artillery horse she rode was anything but pleasant, and fatigued her greatly.

"For a time—but a brief time only—they distanced the pursuers by more than a mile, as they dashed along a neglected and unfrequented old road that led to some woody and hilly ground on the left of the way they had been traversing; but the better mounted troopers of the Light Cavalry now gained on them fast—those dreaded 3rd Bengal Cavalry, who had committed so many atrocities, and destroyed poor Colonel Ripley and the officers of the 54th Regiment.

While galloping furiously on, leaping their horses over stony runnels and rugged gullies, plunging down sometimes into ravines, where jungle, brushwood, giant leaves, green gourds, and yellow pumpkins grew, rank and thick together, with wild figs, trailers, and cotton plants; on—on, they knew not whither, and only seeing that the road was becoming more rough, more hilly, and more broken up—while riding thus, we say, Harrower looked back with rage and bitterness mingling in his heart.

One sowar had outridden all the rest, being perhaps better mounted. Jack could see with painful distinctness—the fellow was so close—his handsome silver grey uniform, faced with scarlet, and the glancing appointments; his white helmet and dark face; his sword-blade that flashed in the sun; his foam-flecked horse, with flattened, distended nostrils, and neck outstretched, with the long mane floating backward in the air! He was barely a hundred yards distant from them now, and a shot from his pistol or carbine might prove, by wounding one, the destruction of them all.

If Lena's horse fell, the soubadar and he could but die sword in hand by her side!

"Push on, Lena," he cried; "keep your hand firm on the bridle, my dear girl, and shorten the reins. These scoundrels are too many for us, and we may come to grief at last; yet it will go hard with me," he added, "if I do not polish off one Pandy, at least!"

Jack drew a pistol from his belt as he spoke, and checking his horse until the leading sowar came within range, he took a deadly aim, and—fired!

With a wild cry, the trooper threw up his arms and his sword,

and fell over the crupper of his charger, which reared and fell back upon him, while Harrower again lashed his horse after his companions; and all the swifter had they to speed that blood had now been shed.

"There, one greased cartridge has done its work well!" thought Harrower, grimly.

But what new calamity was this, which drew an exclamation of dismay from the soubadar-major?

The roadway seemed to end, where broad in front of them lay the roaring current of a mountain stream, a deep and brawling tributary of the Jumna, which there were no apparent means of crossing, for the old bridge that had been built by Ali Merdan Khan, which had rung beneath the Persian host of Nadir Shah, and later still to the marching brigades of "Wellesley Sahib," and the victors of Assaye, had long since gone to ruin, and been swept from its marble piers.

The deep river was roaring in their front, and twelve mounted enemies, fired by all the fury that fanaticism and lust of cruelty could engender, were pressing close behind them!

CHAPTER XLIX.

COLONEL PERSHAD SING AT HOME.

IT is towards the end of this eventful month of May, when we must take the reader back to Delhi (which had now become a vast garrison of sepoys, whose numbers were daily increasing), and to Dr. Weston's handsome mansion, with its spacious gardens, in the suburb beside the Jumna.

The peacocks still spread their gorgeous plumage on the white marble terrace; the great and sombre adjutant-birds were still dozing in the sunshine, on the balustrades of the roof, and driving thence the ravens from time to time. The oleander with its perfumed clusters of pink; the baubool with its bells of gold; the jasmine and the acacia were still in all their beauty as when we saw them last, with the ring-necked paroquets and the yellow

sparrows (that look like clouds of gold when floating in flocks upon the river), the light green flycatcher, and the turtle-dove perching on their branches, together with blue, amber, and scarlet butterflies, and beetles of giant size, bright as amethysts and emeralds: all seemed unchanged, but the dwelling had a new master now!

In the spacious inner drawing-room, the furniture and English engravings of which were unaltered, but where most of the ornaments had been smashed or appropriated by recent visitors (Gunga Rai having carried off all the bronze idols and statuettes), and where the yellow satin sofas and chairs had all been punctured again and again by the swords and bayonets of those in search of concealed valuables, sat the new lord of the mansion, on a species of divan, composed chiefly of pillows abstracted from the various beds, and piled up for his ease and luxury upon the matting which covered the floor in lieu of a carpet—Pershad Sing, ex-Thug, late Havildar, and now Colonel of the 54th Native Infantry, dressed, not in uniform, which the sepoys generally avoid when not on parade, but in a loose Eastern dress, with a white turban of fine muslin on his head, and Dr. Weston's magnificent hookah close by him with the china vase encased in silver filigree, and its coils covered with crimson and gold threads.

The gallant officer had a fine English watch in his fob, and on every finger a valuable gold ring, all the spoil of the dead, and each relic might have told a terrible story.

We have described him as having eyes, whiskers, and moustaches of the jettest block, and the latter as of such enormous length, that they were carried over his shoulders and tied behind at the nape of his neck. His small, spare, and lean figure was hidden amid the amplitude of his flowing cotton dress; but his legs and feet were bare, though Colonel Pershad Sing now gave himself all the airs of a Hindoo of rank, acting as he thought the soubadar-major of the Mapert-ka-Pultan should do.

He lounged listlessly and crook-legged on his soft and improvised divan, and had usually on each side of him an attendant, with two of Dr. Weston's silver salvers, containing the betel-leaf which is constantly chewed by all high caste Brahmins, who reckon it as the *fifth* among their "eight sensual delights," and consequently deem it a great luxury. Close by, was one of the Doctor's china winecoolers, into which he languidly dropped the leaves, as the juice became extracted.

There was a decidedly blasé air about Pershad Sing now; the once active, wiry, and dapper little sepoy Havildar had indulged to satiety, in excesses of every kind, in luxury, and in a most unoriental amount of jollity, during the run of riot enjoyed by the mutineers of late—a riot that seemed unlikely to terminate, for the citizens committed outrages on each other, and every other week a kotwal, or new mayor, was impaled or blown from a gun.

On the evening in question, the valiant little Colonel had dis-

pensed with his two Hindoo slave-girls, and, as he was unlikely to be disturbed by visitors, preferred to receive his betel-leaf from a salver held by the white hands of—Kate Mellon!

She was half kneeling on the pillows near him, dressed, not in Eastern costume, but in her own attire, for she had now the use of her own room, and the wardrobes of herself and sisters.

Nearly four weeks had elapsed since she deemed herself a widow, and she had now been some days in the hands of Pershad Sing, who brought her to his house—by a strange chance her father's—on that night when he had found her with Mohassan and the friendly Parsees at the Cashmere Gate, and as yet, through God's mercy, she had neither been killed, nor even maltreated.

When he first dragged her home to be his slave and victim Pershad Sing was ignorant that she was one of the missing daughters of the Padre Weston Sahib, for whom Mirza Mogul had ransacked all the city, and for whom he had offered the princely reward of one hundred golden mohurs.

To give her up *after* she had been one night under his roof, Pershad Sing was quite well aware would only have perilled his own head, and as he set some store upon the retention of it, he secluded Kate for himself, and yet so great was his terror of Mogul, the new Commander-in-Chief, that his mind was sorely divided between a great admiration for Kate's person, and a conviction that his own safety required her death, as the best means of concealing that she had ever been in his house.

This wholesome dread of the prince, and his doubts of how to act, caused him to respect and treat her tolerably well, and also to seclude her sedulously from his companions and visitors, among whom were the Fakir Gunga Rai, the Rissaldar Shumshoodeen Khan, and especially Assim Alee, the Doctor's native valet, who would at once have recognised her, and claimed the reward.

If the worthy Parsee merchant in the street of silver, and his disciples of Zoroaster all escaped pillage to their own great astonishment, it was from this circumstance too—the chill of dismay that came over Pershad Sing on discovering who his prisoner was, and which made him at first resolve on a system of secresy, that every day filled him with fresh qualms, and with fears that she might be found out by the Rissaldar, or that the Parsee might in revenge, speak of the prisoner who had been taken from him, for, dead or alive, she was worth a hundred mohurs.

So strong was the latter fear, that one day Pershad visited the merchant to pledge him to secresy, under the most terrible threats, adding solemnly the assertion that the "Mem Sahib was no longer in Delhi," and that he had permitted her to escape in safety to Kurnaul.

"If the Hindoo dog swore it on the waters of the Ganges, I would not believe him!" said the Parsee, when Pershad had

withdrawn; neither would I believe a Mohammedan, even if he swore by the shirt of the Prophet at Candahar. I trust none but the Feringhees, the poor Feringhees who ruled the land so well, and let us trade in peace."

But the information which he gave to Safiyah, the daughter of Khoda Bux, when next day she called at his shop to make some purchases, that young Mrs. Mellon was a prisoner in her father's house, and in the hands of Pershad Sing, a somewhat noted man among the mutineers, proved startling tidings indeed.

"Why should I have given her up to Mirza Mogul?" the Colonel would sometimes mutter to himself; "were not all the white women we could find at the Cashmere Gate taken to him; and like that Mohammedan cur, Baboo Sing—whose face might make a horse rear or scare a flock of crows—Mogul has his zenana filled with the prettiest girls of Bundelcund and Lahore, while I have only this one, and yet—and yet—it were safer to cast her into the Jumna than to have her about me."

Some such dark and distracting thoughts were occurring to him, when Kate knelt near him with the salver of betel-leaf, and there was consequently a fierce and sombre expression in his eyes as he surveyed her. She was pale and hollow-cheeked, with her features acutely delicate now, but still she was brilliantly fair, with the wealth of her auburn tresses braided about her head, and tinged with gold in the sunshine.

She had on a dark dress, and a few jet ornaments, for she deemed herself, we have said, a widow; she was plainly but neatly attired—for even amid her great grief the force of habit caused her to make a careful toilette.

Under the eyes of Pershad Sing she cowered and shrunk back, just when in the act of handing him the required supply of his beloved leaf.

"Oh," she moaned, "can I do anything to please you, sir?"

"Yes, you might," growled Pershad.

"To win your favour!" she began.

"You have already won it," interrupted Pershad, who by constant intercourse with the British officers of his regiment—the poor fellows whose bodies were still lying, unburied, in the waggon beside the Flagstaff Tower—had picked up a tolerable smattering of the English language: "you are here, alive and safe, *as yet*, what more would you wish?"

"True—for my life I thank you," she answered, meekly.

"And there is one simple way by which you might please me."

"Name it, sir," said Kate, closing her eyes, and shuddering in the fear of what he might say.

"It is to hold your tongue, which speaks of nothing but useless grief; and cease to upbraid me by your tears, for they weary me, and I shall get tired of them shortly."

He regarded her gloomily for a time, and then melted by her beauty and grace, and taking courage from her utter helplessness, he seized her shrinking hand, and said in what he meant to be his most winning manner,—

"Why are you so obstinate and cruel, if you pretend to be grateful? You will neither love me nor marry me—nor can I even kiss you (perhaps my moustaches smell of betel), and yet you are my slave, whom I might cut to pieces, joint by joint, and toss to the alligators in the Jumna, or give to the budmashes of Delhi to nail by the hands and feet on the city wall."

Kate had become used to this style of love-making, and it could neither excite her laughter or her scorn.

"Marry *you!*" she exclaimed, in a bitter and hollow voice; "you forget that I am already married."

"To a vile Feringhee, who is no doubt dead—but dead or living what does it matter to me? I could marry you too for all that; tears again," he growled, "stop them, I tell you—I hate the sight of them! By the god of Terror, a little more of this work, and I shall twist the holy roomal round your throat!" he added, savagely, as his old Thug propensities occurred to him. "Do you fear the suttee if I die before you?" he resumed; "the holy suttee which your blasphemous people preached against and put down, and which we shall now revive, as the men of your accursed race are exterminated. If so, you might be excused, as being of another lineage; and yet I saw four wives and five slave-girls, all of different nations, cheerfully ascend the funeral pile of Runjeet Sing, and perish in the flames, amid clouds of incense and perfume."

"I owe you thanks for one thing, sir."

"Glad to hear it—what may this one thing be?"

"You did not punish the poor Parsee for protecting me."

"Though a Gueber—a cursed, idolatrous worshipper of the god of Fire, he has, nevertheless, a high reputation in Delhi."

"How—he, a Parsee?"

"Yes—even he."

"As a man and a merchant?" continued poor Kate, hoping to gain the man's good will by conversing with him.

"Yes," replied Pershad, "both as a man and a merchant, for it is said of Mohassan that he has become wealthy by selling to the rich man at his own price, and to the poor at theirs. Hence is Mohassan both prosperous and popular."

It was chiefly when Pershad intoxicated himself with bhang or with raki (a habit he had acquired in cantonments) that Kate feared him, for then his prudence and his fear of the Prince Mogul alike departed. The nights were a source of greater terror to her even than the day. She usually barricaded herself in her own room, and never undressed. Before committing her-

self to sleep, and even when she prayed, she felt thoroughly resolved, if he came to molest her, to leap headlong from the window on to the marble terrace, which was nearly fifty feet below. She nightly on her knees implored God to pardon her for this terrible resolution, and she put implicit faith in Him, believing that her mental sufferings and her great endurance would procure her a peaceful death-bed.

To this crushed state of calm desperatiou had the once laughing bride of Rowley Mellou come!

It happened that Pershad Sing was often on duty at the camp, at the palace, aud elsewhere; but during such absences she was strictly watched. The gates of the high walls around the house were always closed, and he had a sepoy guard ou his residence, for there the colours of the regimeut—the same that it had borue in the campaign against Runjeet Sing—were lodged with all formality.

Many of his nights were spent with the distinguished visitors before named; and from these he had carefully to conceal the fact of her existence; and in the dark hours as they stole on, and while she lay awake with an anxious and fluttering heart, she could hear the monotonous songs of the Hindoos and the beating of tom-tom, with the tiukling anklet bells of the Nautch girls, and others of more doubtful repute, who danced before Pershad and his guests in her drawiug-room.

Lying in her own bed, with her sad face on its old pillow, it was difficult to conceive, at times, that she was not labouring under some horrible nightmare, from which she would be wakened by the voices of Lena and Polly in the next room!

CHAPTER L.

THE FAKIR MAKES A DISCOVERY.

THOUGH naturally a joyous and a brilliant girl, Kate was one of thought and reflection; so there had been times, when in the midst of her greatest happiness and the flush of her love for Mellon, she had wondered in her heart how she would *feel* if she lost him and was left alone in the world.

In those times she would pray secretly to Heaven, that in the hour he was taken that she should be gone before him, or should soon follow; and now—*now*, he was gone, perhaps, and she still lingered here, reserved for a fate of which she could not see the end, save that too probably it would be a horrible one!

And oh! if—for she knew that she was in cruel, frightful, and merciless hands—if she should be degraded, as she knew too many of her countrywomen, her friends and companions, had been in the streets of Delhi—even those who had gathered round her in that last moment of happiness, when her father blessed her, and hailed her as a wedded wife—if she should be rendered loathsome in her own sight, perhaps, as some were, disfigured and mutilated, how could she survive, even if found and freed by Rowley Mellon—jolly, laughing Rowley, with his long, fair whiskers, and half affected air, which she was wont to quiz in the first days of their courtship, and before flirtation gave place to solid affection.

Then tears would almost choke her, and despair fill her soul—black and hopeless despair! She was alone, fearfully and helplessly alone, and yet in her father's house. How much better off were Lena and Harrower in their companionship, even in the wilderness through which they had at times to wander.

The familiar objects which met her eye at every turn, the innumerable personal relics of her lost family added to the poignancy of Kate's grief; now it was some of her papa's favourite books, then portions of Lena's music, with all its associations; perhaps a note of Dicky Rivers's to Polly, or some of little Willie's toys, and though last not least, Jack Harrower's sketch of Thorpe Audley, and the church, under the shadow of

which their mother's grave was lying in peaceful England, far, far away.

The truthfulness of Kate Mellon, her purity, her love for her lost, but handsome and manly young bridegroom; her sweet and tender thoughts; her piety, which was great; her artlessness, and all her pretty and ladylike ways, were utterly lost on persons such as those among whom she found herself now, the Hindoo cousins, nieces, and slaves of Pershad Sing, who filled the house of which he had so lawlessly possessed himself.

It was a mercy for her that the terror of Mirza Mogul was a shield for a time, though Pershad hovered between her possession and her destruction; for he knew that if the knowledge of her having been in his hands ever came to the prince's ear, at any time, however remote, his head would not be worth a single ana.

Kate had become calm now; when alone, she had ceased to use that movement of the body in which many women indulge during their passionate grief, bending the head and swaying to and fro. Whether her relations and her husband—the husband of an hour—were all dead, or whether some survived, she feared she should never know; so she only longed for death as a means, perhaps, of enlightenment, of reunion, and most certainly of freedom from the odious attentions of Pershad Sing.

So the dreary and anxious days and nights stole on, and she remained a captive in her father's house, with her wedding ring tied amid the masses of her beautiful auburn hair, lest the precious relic should be taken from her.

She was surrounded by nearly all her old familiar objects, the pictures, hangings, and furniture, the drawing-room and library remained nearly untouched; but where was her father with his kind kiss on meeting and parting, his morning and evening prayers; where Lena, with her almost matronly gravity of deportment; the joyous Polly and sweet little Willie?

Now the rooms were desecrated by noisy cavalry sowars, howling fakirs, dancing girls, and natives of all kinds, often so intoxicated with bhang, that her heart died within her of terror, when she heard the din below, though Pershad kept her secluded in her own room.

Escape was hopeless, so securely was she watched; but even if she got once beyond the garden walls, whither could she go, but to anticipate her doom, at the hands of those who might prove worse than Pershad Sing?

It could scarcely add to her mortification to know that Ferukh Pandy and her father's valet, Assim Alee, were among the daily companions of her lord and proprietor, the ex-havildar. The latter was in expectation of being sent with the 54th regiment, to reinforce Nana Sahib, at Cawnpore, where, after the massacre

there, a cavalry sowar carried of a daughter of General Wheeler (just as Pershad had done Kate Mellon), and the poor girl was never heard of again with any accuracy.

"Once out of Delhi," thought our new colonel, "once beyond the sphere and the terror of Mogul, and *then*—" he ground his teeth, as he left his thoughts unuttered.

One evening she had been in compulsory attendance upon him, supplying him with betel-leaf and fanning his dingy visage with a large feather fan which had belonged to Polly (and which that young lady used to find a great accessory in her little flirting conversations) till he dropped asleep; and on this evening a change came over the tenor of her life—a change that was for the worse.

On Pershad gradually snorting away into slumber, among the pillows of the divan he had made for himself, she, while a glance of loathing escaped her, rose softly to steal from the inner drawing-room back to her own bed chamber, when the silken curtain of the doorway was withdrawn, and she suddenly found herself confronted by two natives of very appalling aspect.

One was almost nude—at least he only wore a short, yellow shirt and scarlet cummerbund, with his matted hair hanging in dusty and knotted masses over his shoulders, and his face, which was smeared with ashes and red ochre in the form of a triangle—the emblem of the triple god—for he was the Fakir Gunga Rai. The other wore the light grey uniform of the Bengal Cavalry, and was a man of great bulk, stature, and apparent strength, with a singularly ferocious expression of face—an expression all the more hideous, that though he had enormous mustachios, save two black orifices, he had not the smallest indication of a nose; and to add to the grotesque ugliness of his visage, it was surmounted by a Light Cavalry helmet, from the crest of which waved a large plume of scarlet horse-hair, for he was the Rissaldar Shumshoodeen Khan, who in passing had dropped in to "tiff" with his new brother officer of the Infantry.

On seeing Kate, they smultaneously uttered a shout, and both grasped her, while the low shriek that escaped her brought Pershad Sing to his feet in rage and consternation, and with a bitter imprecation, in Hindostanee, on his lips.

"Oh! Brahma, Vishnu, and Seva!" cried the fakir; "oh! Spirit who pervadest fire, here is one Feringhee left in Delhi!"

"A woman, too—oh! Pershad Sing—a sly fellow!" added the Rissaldar, laughing.

"How long have you secreted her here? I thought you a better Brahmin, than thus to cheat the budmashes of the bazaars and market-place."

"Ho, ho! this must be the girl he found with the cursed idolaters at the Cashmere Gate! I heard the story whispered

about in the khans and bazaars. Oho! Pershad Sing!" and they laughed loudly, as each in turn twisted the poor girl about, surveying her with wolfish eyes of admiration, that made her blood curdle, while Pershad Sing, with every hair of his absurd mustachios bristling with mingled fear and anger, and already in anticipation feeling his head rather loose on his shoulders, hastened forward and, releasing her, ordered her to retire, on which she fled to her room and locked herself in.

"Oh!" she wailed in her despair, "death is coming close—close to me now, indeed—dear, dear Rowley!"

From the two valets, Ferukh Pandy and Assim Alee, and from all who might have recognised her as a daughter of "Weston Sahib," had he carefully concealed the fact of her existence; and now, when every hour expecting Mogul's order to march for Cawnpore, and when he had a covered waggon for her conveyance out of the city, that she should have been discovered by these two visitors, from the peculiar nature of their characters, filled him with the greatest alarm.

"So the eight sensual delights of which the Holy Vedas speak are complete," said the fakir. "Soul of Brahma! my fine fellow, thou dost not content thyself with tobacco and betel-leaf!"

"Is she the girl you found at the Cashmere Gate?" asked the Rissaldar, in his snuffling voice, showing all his huge teeth as he laughed heartily.

"Yes," replied Pershad, greatly annoyed.

"Rumour said she was a daughter of the padre Weston Sahib."

"Then rumour lied!" said Pershad, who grew almost pea-green at this remark; "She was a fugitive from Meerut—here no one knows anything about her. I may rely on you, my friends?"

"Of what are you afraid?" asked the fakir, suspiciously.

"Bah! I am sick of killing the Feringhees," said Shumshoodeen; "get us a bottle of raki, or some of the padre Weston's wine (if there is any of it left), a plate of betel-leaf, and then we shall talk about it."

From that hour the miseries of Kate Mellon were increased. The repulsive fakir, and the brutal, brawling cavalry sowar, whenever they came, insisted on her presence, and that she should play on the now half-unstrung piano, and even sing to them; and Pershad was afraid to refuse them; and to describe her terror and repugnance of the whole trio, would require a powerful pen indeed!

CHAPTER LI.

GONE!

THE constant dread of her being discovered had now become a reality, and caused Pershad Sing to regret bitterly that he had not at once destroyed her, and he thought he should yet do so, while her identity remained unknown.

"Oh! God—oh! kind Heaven—no hope—no succour—no escape!" wailed Kate, when she found herself summoned to appear before such visitors as the two men who had discovered her.

Gunga Rai now came to the mansion of the "Colonel" three or four times every day, upon various pretences; but the real reason was that he had personally some designs upon Kate, whose beauty had dazzled, while her utter helplessness encouraged him to hope, that by pretending to be her friend, he might lure her out of the hands of Pershad Sing, and into his own power.

Hoping to corrupt her, or to excite what he conceived to be love in her breast, the hideous fakir sung amorous songs in Oordoo, the words of which fell on poor Kate's ear harmlessly as Gaelic, Sanscrit, or the unknown tongue would have done. Fortunately for her sweet sensibility, the English girl knew not a word of what this horror in human form chaunted, with his monotonous accompauiment on the tom-tom; but the spirit of the warmly voluptuous love-songs of Jayadeva, with the passion of the god Rama for the goddess Sita, if it had no effect upon the unhappy captive, exerted a dangerous power upon the imagination of the Rissaldar and that of Pershad Sing; thus, at times, she could read an expression in their black and glittering eyes that increased her terror.

In silent desperation the girl listened and looked on; texts, prayers, and fragments of Scripture came oddly to her memory, but without coherency; as a bird by the eye of a rattlesnake, she was fascinated by the strange appearance of the fakir, who was seated on his heels, like a Hindoo idol, singing, and playing alternately on the Indian drum or the vina, the wires of which he struck with his long and talon-like nails, while ogling her all the while through his matted elf-locks.

On the sound of many voices being heard in the garden, Pershad dismissed her in haste to her own room, where, as frequently before, she heard all the din of a Hindoo entertainment in the apartments below.

The plunder of the British Treasury had enabled the old King of Delhi, Mohammed Bahadoor Shah, to be lavish in mohurs to his chief adherents. Several had lately found their way into the pockets of Pershad Sing; and on this night he had resolved to give a final feast before marching for Cawnpore.

The gardens and mansion were made gay with hundreds of lanterns made of coloured paper, and with the explosion of fireworks, rockets, and lights red, blue, green, and purple; while sweetmeats, mangoes, and betel-leaf were given in plenty, with much of Dr. Weston's good wine for those who were not particular about the precepts of the Prophet, if Mohammedans, or their caste, if Hindoos.

After a time all had departed—even the Nautch girls, whose dances were sometimes as much calculated to excite evil as the songs of Jayadeva—all but Gunga Rai and Shumshoodeen Khan, who had resolved to "make a night of it."

Fearful, as usual, of Kate being recognized, Pershad Sing had resolutely refused to let her be seen by any of his motley guests; but now his two troublesome friends, who were both inflamed by wine and bent on cruelty and mischief, urged that the miserable girl must be again brought forth, or that they should go to her!

As the latter intention might have been resented sword in hand, they did not immediately put it in execution, but had recourse to taunts.

"If she treated me as she treats you," said the Rissaldar, "I would bind her hard and fast to a red-hot cannon."

"We shall soon overcome her childish fears and scruples," said the fakir, in his shrill whistling voice; "the daughter of a burnt father! and then——"

"What then?" asked Pershad, gloomily.

"To the Jumna with her!"

"Of that necessity I am the best judge," said Pershad, with difficulty keeping down his anger at all this interference in his affairs.

"Is Thuggee forgotten? Remember that we are the sworn servants of the goddess of destruction. Feringhee women!" continued the fakir, speaking with intense scorn, and in his energy throwing back the tangled masses of his hair, showing that, in lieu of ashes, he had painted on his brow a scarlet circle, the third eye of Seva, worn in memory of the god having once winked, and thereby involved the world in darkness for a thousand years; "Feringhee women—what shall we say of them? They walk in public with men; they ride on horses, they drive in car-

riages, and sit at table with men; they dance—dance like Nautch girls or Bayaderes, and with men to whom they are unrelated by blood, or tie, or marriage! They show their faces, yea, and their bosoms, without shame! Pooh! pooh! they are but cunning tricksters, those Feringhee girls; and is it one of them you would protect, Pershad Sing—you, who on the day of the revolt had your hands dyed red enough with the blood of her race at the Cashmere Gate?"

"Two of those English kafirs, I understand, have been seen lurking in the forest of Soonput," said Pershad Sing, uneasily, to change the conversation.

"Yes, a sahib and a mem sahib," replied the Rissaldar, cramming his huge mouth with betel-leaf, which did not improve his utterance; "and they were traced by Gunga to the fort of the Zemindar Lall; so, by order of Mirza Mogul, a party of ours shall be in search of them to-morrow. By night we may expect them in Delhi, and Delhi shall have some amusement in seeing the last of the race made food for the jackals. Death to all the Topee-wallahs!" he added, using the genuine Asiatic term of contempt for all Europeans—hat-fellows.

"Hear me," resumed the fakir, who was not to be baffled; "hear me, I say, for I would speak again."

It was Friday, and Gunga Rai, after riding in from the house of the Zemindar Lall, had been officiating at a Hindoo temple near the Doab canal, and been busy there smearing a white marble image of Ganesa with ghee and cocoa-nut oil. He had spent a busy day, and knew that he had to set out for the fort of the zemindar again with the naick and his two troopers; therefore, if the wine had inflamed his passions, religious enthusiasm made him cross, all the more that he had regaled himself that afternoon by swinging in mid-air over Chandney Choke, with a pair of iron hooks under his shoulder-blades.

"Take up the tom-tom, and give us another song, friend Gunga," said Pershad; "we are in no humour for being preached to."

"And try some more of the wine," suggested Shumshoodeen Khan, as he stretched himself on a sofa at full length. "Did this golden wine of Cabul belong to the padre Weston?"

"The padre Weston!" exclaimed the fakir, as a sudden thought seemed to strike him.

"Yes," said Pershad, uneasily, for the snake-like eyes of the fakir were on him. "Why do you ask?"

"Because it has a strange flavour," replied the ex-sowar.

"Likely enough—a musk rat was found in the cellar."

"Ah, it does taste of musk," said Shumshoodeen, affecting the air of a connoisseur, and putting the glass to where his nose

should have been, just as he had seen some of the poor slaughtered subs of the 3rd Cavalry do in the mess-bungalow; for the idea of a musk rat tainting wine is a popular fallacy in many parts of India; but now the fakir, who had also discovered "a rat" in another fashion, exclaimed,—

"It must be true!"

"What is true?" asked Pershad; "the wine?"

"Pooh! pooh! an idea I have."

"And this idea?"

"Yea, true as that Vishnu is lord of the universe," cried the fakir, whose voice rose into a shrill scream, "that he has been nine times among us in the flesh, and shall appear a tenth time on a horse in the flaming heavens, at the consummation of all things —it is true!"

"Are you going mad?" asked Pershad, astonished by this outburst.

"No, but I am growing wiser," replied the other, with a leering grin; "for I find that the girl you seclude here is the lost daughter of the old kafir, Weston Sahib, for whom a hundred gold mohurs are offered by Mirza Mogul."

"It is false!" said Pershad Sing, with such evident rage and trepidation, that the keen-eyed and sharp-witted fakir saw his mere guess was a correct one.

"Pooh! pooh! it is true."

"How dare you pretend to know?"

"I have had her horoscope cast, and by the configuration of the planets—by the evidence of the stars, I find that she is a daughter of the Feringhee padre Weston, and by the holy bull of Seva, if you do not bring her forth to-night, I go to-morrow to the Dewan Khana, and you know for what purpose."

At this threat, the perspiration stood in globules on the brow of Pershad, who believed all the cunning fakir's nonsense about the horoscope, for he *had* heard of such things; and even the ruffianly Rissaldar began to look exceedingly uncomfortable, not knowing how much *he* might be compromised by the affair.

"Is this a pleasant return for all my hospitality?" stammered Pershad reproachfully, while he glanced to where his pistols lay on a white marble console; but the life of a fakir is sacred.

"No, I mean it not for that," sneered Gunga Rai, who saw the glance, and knit his brows.

"For what, then?"

"A punishment."

"Of what have I been guilty?"

"Covetousness and cunning—lies and deceit."

"And you will destroy me?" groaned Pershad.

"No, because I feel certain that you will have out the Feringhee girl, that we may amuse ourselves with her terror. Is she not an idolater, whom we may destroy if we please?"

"You believe yourself a Brahmin, Gunga Rai?" urged Pershad in desperation, but whose terror was all selfishly personal.

"A Brahmin, I am—purest of the pure."

"Well," said Pershad, with a contemptuous glance at the box of bhang and the empty bottles that lay near the fakir, "did not our forefathers, who were Brahmins, teach the doctrine that all mankind have a right to worship the Creator in any fashion they choose, and that *all* fashions are acceptable to Vishnu; that the world is but a garden planted with flowers of every colour, and that like sincerity, all colours are acceptable to him?"

"Rama! Rama! you should have thought of all that before slaughtering the Feringhees at the Cashmere Gate," said the fakir, doggedly, tugging at the Brahmin string which was over his left shoulder; "she is one, and must die too!"

"But not at once, oh, Gunga, light of religion," said the Rissaldar, into whose brain the fumes of the wine and bhang were mounting together, for in their new system of orgies these men were forgetting alike caste and faith together.

"At once, or to-morrow I go to the Dewan Khana," responded the obdurate luminary referred to.

"I shall tell Baboo that you are mad, and not to admit you," said Pershad, in great tribulation of spirit; "Baboo is a good Mohammedan, a true man, and will defeud me."

"Talk not of Baboo Bulli Sing," replied the Fakir, his shrill pipe rising again to an angry scream, while he threw up his long, lean hands with their demon-like claws; "he is a Mohammedan, and a Thug to boot; but he was never very particular as to what he did. As a boy he was the punkah-wallah of the Christian church, near the Main Guard,* and at the Mohammedan Mohurrum, was wont to exhibit himself as the Ass Borak, with a man's face and a peacock's tail. He will do anything to please the princes, but not you; and if once I speak you are a lost man, Pershad Sing—by Yama, King of Hell, you are!"

As he spoke his copper-coloured visage became ashy in hue, his fierce, hollow eyes were bloodshot, and seemed to shoot fire; his lips were compressed and white, while his hair seemed to bristle with the rancorous fury that inspired him.

His fierce threat, his tone, and aspect carried terror to the heart of Pershad Sing, together with a conviction that he would not be trifled with. Pershad knew and felt the power the Fakir had over him, and he knew that by the horrible nature of his self-imposed penances, Gunga Rai's voice was nearly law in Delhi.

* St. James's Church, in Delhi, destroyed during the mutiny.

"I yield," said Pershad, almost beside himself with rage.

"Follow me, then!" cried the huge Rissaldar, staggering up.

"Nay, I shall guide you. We shall bring forth the Feringhee girl, do with her and me as you will, only be—silent."

"Silent as the waters of the Jumna!" added the Fakir, with a deadly leer, the import of which there was no mistaking, as they all started to their feet, and Pershad led the way to Kate's room.

Now that these men were together, skilled in all the secrets of Thuggee, and fired to a terrible pitch of excitement by bhang and the wines to which they were totally unaccustomed, what chance of mercy had poor Kate Mellon at their hands?

"Make less noise, Rissaldar," said Pershad, as they ascended the staircase, where the oil-shades were all lighted.

"Why?" asked the other, in a hoarse whisper.

"Lest we scare her,"

"Rama!" chuckled the Fakir, "and what matter will it be if we do?"

"She may cast herself from a window—I have often feared her doing so ere now."

"When all is over," whispered the Fakir, "we must remember the roomal—the holy loop which Kalee throws round the necks of the unbelieving, the wicked, and the idolatrous."

"It is here," said the Rissaldar, untying his crimson sash, which had whilom belonged to the assassinated commander of the 3rd Cavalry; "this will do."

They listened at Kate's door; all was silent within.

"A-bed?" suggested the Fakir, with his peculiar leer between his tangles of hair; "ho! ho! the daughter of the man whose sole business was to preach down the worship of our gods, and to spit upon the Vedas of Brahma!"

Pershad tried the lock, for the house had been constructed somewhat after the Europcan fashion; but the door, which had Venetian blinds in its panels, was secured and the key gone.

They called on their intended victim repeatedly, but without receiving an answer. Then by a simultaneous movement with their shoulders, they burst open the somewhat frail and slender barrier, tumbling with its fragments into the room in a heap.

The pretty little bed, with its white muslin drapery, stood there unslept in apparently, and the mosquito curtains were undrawn.

Beside the toilette-table, which was covered with white muslin and fine lace, near the mirror an oil-shade was burning. The windows were all closed; Pershad looked over one; there was nothing lying on the terrace below, so she had not escaped that way; and now, save its furniture, the room was undoubtedly empty.

She was gone—gone they knew not how or whither, nor could

she be found, though the most accurate search was made between the cellars, where the musk rats were alleged to taint the wine, and the roof, where the adjutant-birds sat blinking in the moonlight—gone without leaving a trace behind, and greater grew the terror and the rage of Pershad Sing, who feared that some of his recent numerous guests might have discovered and abducted her.

But this the havildar, the naick, and sepoys of the guard upon his residence declared to be impossible, as no European woman had passed the gates that night.

CHAPTER LII.

IN THE ZENANA.

WHILE her sisters were undergoing perils greater even than her own, though necessarily there was a sad similarity in all their thoughts, regrets, and sorrows, Polly Weston was still secluded in the Zenana, a large and oblong building, which adjoins the river front of the Palace of Delhi, and immediately overlooks the Jumna, as those who have been quartered in the cantonments must remember. Few of its windows open through that huge eastern rampart, and these are small and elaborately grated.

Immediately under the north-east angle of this edifice is the Sally-port Tower, wherein her father was still confined alone—yet not quite alone, for ever in his solitude the poor old man had always felt himself with God.

From one of the little windows of her apartment, which was situated at a vast height from the ground, Polly could see the bridge of boats that spanned the river, the quaint barges on the Doab Canal with their red and yellow striped sails, and their sides glistening in the sunshine. She could also see the roads that stretched eastward away towards Bareilly and to Meerut, once the scene of many a morning gallop and evening drive.

Along those roads came often the white dust that indicated the march of troops; yet so incessantly were these but the sepoy mutineers, pouring in to join their comrades at Delhi, that the

gleam of advancing arms in the morning sun had long since failed to excite the faintest hope of rescue in the young girl's breast.

To have a window which faced the country thus, was a special favour conferred on Polly, as those of the other ladies (among whom she had not yet been placed) looked but to the royal gardens, or the great court. Two large windows filled in with elaborate brass lattices opened from Polly's room to those celebrated gardens; but, as she was an object of great curiosity to the other ladies of the household, who often promenaded below, she never looked in that direction.

The sight of the palace suggested only ideas of captivity—and worse; but the far open country suggested those of freedom and liberty.

She had a magnificent and airy apartment: the cornices and walls were of chunam—the finely-pounded shell-lime of Hindostan. It was white as snow, and worked like plaster of Paris, into flowers, figures, and elaborate arabesques, painted and gilded with singular taste and delicate beauty.

Freshly gathered flowers, in gorgeous Chinese vases, and delicious perfumes from silver filigree bottles, were always around her; but the girl tossed feverishly and restlessly on her bed, the posts of which were lacquered and gilded with all the skill of some artist of Hydrabad, and the coverlet of which was of green cashmere, embroidered with silver threads.

Polly had long been in a low and nervous fever, which prostrated alike her mind and body, leaving her so much the shadow of her former self, and so completely without the charming roundness and brilliant bloom of English girlhood, that there were times when Mirza Abubeker seemed to be careless whether she lived or died; though his pride was still severely piqued by the aversion she showed of him in her moments of perfect sense—aversion and obstinacy to which he, as a prince, and the lord of the greatest zenana in India, was somewhat unaccustomed.

Even the blundering and superstitious hakeems, or doctors, who wrote verses of the Koran on a slip of paper, and washed off the words into a lotah of water, to be drunk by their patients, could not be admitted to the zenana; thus, fortunately perhaps, for Polly, nature was left to work out her own cure.*

In her ravings, when the disease was at its height, she often thought herself a little child again, at her papa's knee, reading

* Matters have changed since then in that part of the world. Each village has now a school, conducted by a Brahmin, with an allowance from Government. A school of medicine for females is to be opened at Delhi—the inmates of harems not being allowed the visits of a male practitioner. Ten new journals have been started this year; seven of these are in Oordoo, and three in Hindee.—*Galignani*, January, 1868.

the psalms and the lessons to him, and being taught her prayers in return; and the poor child—for such she really was—lay on that gorgeous Oriental couch, with her wan, white face, ill, feverish, sick, and heavy in heart, beseeching God to take her out of this world, as being too terrible a place to live in.

She remembered that to miss morning prayers was deemed at home a great omission—her dear, good papa did not consider it a crime; but there were no morning orisons now, save those—and deep and heartfelt prayers they were—that Polly fashioned for herself.

The moment when they had been torn asunder by Baboo Sing and the matchlock men, was always vividly before her.

"My good papa," she would sometimes say aloud; "that refined English scholar and divine, so suave and sweetly tempered to all; so kind, so meek and loving; a perfect Christian, so charitable, so sincere and so unbigoted, to be subjected to outrage at the hands of those horrible natives!"

A sharp and clever girl, Polly had picked up enough of the jargon called Hindostanee, to know what the people about her said; and she was sickened and disgusted by the incessant amount of religion expressed by them on all occasions, and by their unwearying profession of their faith, in using the preface to each chapter of the Koran, and so forth; and by talking perpetually of their creed, as if they—the Mohammedans—were the only faithful servants of Heaven in the whole world.

All this, after the atrocities they had committed, reminded her of the English puritans, and still more of the Scottish covenanters (in Scott's novels), who slew their foes in cold blood, and quoted Scripture most glibly while doing so.

But as the war was a religious one, the Bengalees were full of fiery enthusiasm for their castes and creeds, and were inspired by the most rancorous hatred of the English, whom they believed to be idolatrous pariahs, without either; thus vehement protestations of their various faiths were incessantly on their tongues.

Sequestered among the quaint and oppressive splendour of the Delhi zenana, though treated with every reverence and delicacy as the chosen plaything and toy of an irritable tyrant, Polly, when health or strength began to return, missed sorely the home—even the Anglo-Indian home—of her father's roof; and now the same terror grew upon her, that had tormented her sister Kate—that she might be left for ever in Delhi!

If—as she was hourly told—all her countrymen were really slain throughout Hindostan (and she knew what a "handful" the Europeans were when compared to the millions upon millions of natives), and if she was never released, and never could escape, what a horror to anticipate the slowly coming years of

old age, in a dreary zenana, the object of envy and hatred to its other inmates.

Old age! Oh, why was she not dead already? Why was she recovering?

There were times when a quiet and stern serenity took possession of Polly, and when she seemed to feel that an inexorable destiny had her in hand, and that Moslem-like she must endure and suffer, even unto the end.

Amid all her prayers and grief, there came to memory many episodes of novels and tales, wherein the heroines had been subjected to tribulation of various kinds. She remembered the terrible scene between Rebecca and the Templar in the Castle of Torquilstone, and wondered if, like the noble Jewess, she would prefer the arms of death to those of Bois Guilbert. Then she shuddered and closed her eyes, fearing that she lacked the stern courage of Rebecca, but never had heroine of romance been in a more perilous predicament than she—poor little Polly Weston was now—in the hands of those unscrupulous Mohammedans.

Hideous and wanton old women again and again extolled to her, the manly beauty of the sleepy, sensual, and almost middle-aged Abubeker, saying often that he excelled even Chrishnu, the Oriental Apollo, "the darling god of the Indian women," as he is termed by Sir William Jones; and then they would twangle on their vinas, to songs of Zuleika (as they traditionally named the frail spouse of the old Egyptian Captain Potiphar), and her passion for the Hebrew slave.

By no means to which they resorted could they rouse Polly from the intense apathy that succeeded her fever; she felt herself as if under that species of nightmare peculiar to a disturbed dream, in which the sleeper seems unable to escape or elude a pursuing monster, a falling rock, or other threatened danger; but her state appeared to be a permanent dream, from which there could be neither awaking or escape.

Save Abubeker, two men only visited her; one of these was the imam of the palace mosque, a venerable Mohammedan priest, who could remember the downfall of Delhi, and had seen Wellington at the battle of Assaye; he deplored the slaughter of the Christians—he even wept over it, but he could afford her no hope of escape. The other one, who always made her shudder, was the dancing dervish, Hafiz Falladeen.

As health returned, her naturally fine constitution and innate buoyancy of spirit came to her aid, and then Abubeker, to her torment, paid many visits, to sit by her couch, for notwithstanding all the wasting consequent to her illness, Polly, with her little rosy mouth, and its dimple at each corner—that dimple called by the French *la fossette des Graces*—her small white teeth, her beautiful bust, like that of the Galatea of Raphael, and all

her tresses of golden hair, spread over her pillows, seemed to his cunning and admiring eyes like a Houri of the Koran, enshrined "in her couch hollowed of a single pearl."

"If I do not speak blasphemously," said he one day to the dervish, when they were together in her apartment, "she is like the Hur-al-oyun, who are created not of clay, as mortal women are, but as the blessed Koran affirms, of musk, and devoid of all blemish or defect."

"And yet, most high," said the dervish, grasping with his nervous fingers his lathee, which had done some ugly work in the late revolt, "she is the child of an unbeliever; but God is great! He extends even mercies to the Kafirs."

"She is a veritable Peri," resumed the prince, with an air of gratification, between the puffs of a fragrant hookah, which two little slave girls prepared and placed beside him; "a Peri! she is more like the Peri-banou—the queen of all beautiful spirits."

"She *was*, rather say, Mirza Abubeker," replied the dervish, thinking of her as the bright girl whom he had seen in her father's carriage, or riding on the course, when he had sometimes received alms from her hand.

"I thank the Prophet that as yet Azeezun has not concerned herself about her," said the prince, for though a tyrant in Delhi, he was a very slave to the said Azeezun, his first wife, who is said to have often smote him on the mouth with the heel of her slipper.

Aware that they were talking of herself, the wan and sickly girl turned her soft and languid eyes to each in turn.

"Ah! pretty one, Nour Mahal, as I called you in jest, but not the less truly," said the prince, in pure English, waving his fat dark fingers, which sparkled with diamonds; "eye of lotus-leaf, and cheek of tulip, why so coy and severe with one who loves you as I do?"

"Who loves me—an old married man—the odious idea—how shall I speak to the wretch?" thought Polly, gathering courage, however, on hearing him speak English; but she only shuddered and closed her eyes, on which glances of anger were exchanged between the dervish and the Mirza.

"Listen, girl," said the former, in his harsh and guttural Hindostanee; "he who speaks is great among the men of the earth, and brave as Rustam, who fought the White Demon of Shirauz! Rustam, indeed—compared with Abubeker—whose dog was he?"

(Ere long we shall have occasion to show what the sepoys thought of their prince's valour.)

Polly only struck her thin white hands together, with an expression of weariness and intense disgust.

"Now, by the soul of Solomon, you are unwise and over-nice

for a Feringhee girl—a white-faced mem sahib!" said the prince, with great irritation of manner, as he flung from him the amber mouth-piece of his hookah, and thrusting his hands into the cashmere shawl which formed his girdle, regarded her gloomily. "Has it never occurred to you that instead of doing you the honour to admire you as I do, and to save you as I have done, you might have become the slave of the lowest caste Hindoo—a dog who may have stooped to cut grass and carry water for the horses of the hated Europeans and Eurasians?"

"But, my lord," urged Polly, in growing fear at this change of manner; "I have long known that you have a wife already."

"I have *three*," responded Abubeker, with a quiet laugh at her simplicity.

"And would wish a fourth?"

"To please you, I shall have a fourth."

"Ah, me—a fourth—ah, good heavens!" exclaimed Polly.

"Praise be to God, and his bountiful Prophet, our religion permits us to marry four."

"I always knew that, my lord," replied Polly amid her dismay, blushing in spite of herself; "but it cannot be—it cannot be, for so far as I am concerned—pardon me—but indeed, indeed I would rather die."

"Feringhee girl," said Abubeker, with growing sternness of manner, "do you think that Heaven sent you into this world to please yourself?"

"No, my lord."

"No—who then?"

"Alas! I know not," sighed Polly wearily, as her tears began to flow.

"Shall I tell you?" asked the other, imperiously.

"If you choose, my lord."

"Then you came into this world to please *me*," was the confident reply of Mirza Abubeker.

CHAPTER LIII.

NEWS FOR POLLY.

IN vain were presents and ornaments of enormous value, and such as India only could produce, heaped before Polly Weston; in vain were embroidered dresses, the most wonderful of Delhi needle-work, the bright silks of China, the muslins of Dacca, the soft shawls of Cashmere, purses of mohurs, bracelets, necklaces, girdles, and brooches of baubool and champac, with bangles and rings, in which glittered sapphires, emeralds, and diamonds, the very dross of the Orient, laid at her feet: Polly was listless, heedless, absorbed, and barely bestowed on them a vacant glance.

She longed only for death, or for restoration to that which never more could be as it had been—her broken home and her father's protection; to her sisters and all their friends, and to Dicky Rivers, with his fun and laughter, and half schoolboy slang, picked up at Addiscombe and Brompton Barracks.

"Poor dear Dicky—we were such friends," she would murmur; "and he loved me so—may I not say he loves me still? ah, if in life, assuredly he yet loves cousin Polly!"

Where was he, and where their orphan charge, little Willie, now? It seemed ages since Willie wept, with his rosy face buried among her skirts, for his dead terrior, Gyp, and since the little cur had been buried among the oleanders by Phil Ryder, of the 32nd.

"She weeps incessantly!" said Abubeker, impatiently, to Hafiz Falladeen, on leaving her one day.

"Time will cure all."

"But this silly grief retards her recovery—and she is most wearifully sad," urged the prince.

"Then endeavour to amuse her, most high."

"It is our pleasure to be amused—not our task to amuse," was the haughty reply.

"You know the language of her people—now, let us hope, the language of the dead; tell her stories to make her laugh."

"To make her laugh," echoed the prince, disdainfully.

"Tell her the 'Tales of the Parrot;' you know Persian, and

can read them. Tell her of the Princess of Babel and the two musicians—how the celestial traveller, like Harut, sank into the well of Babel, and of the white-robed Peri, who left the couch of Pharaoh, to enlighten the magicians of Hindostan; tell her of the laughing fish, and the sea-drinking crocodile; tell her—"

But here the dervish paused, for a dark frown had gathered on the face of Abubeker.

"Who am I, to amuse a Feringhee girl—a slave?" said he, in growing anger; "but in three days I shall visit her again, and if she still weeps, woe to her!"

"I would speak, but I know not her language; moreover, I seem to terrify her."

"It is that disgusting serpent you carry about with you, Hafiz, thereby acting like a vile cur of a Hindoo, rather than a follower of the Prophet," said Abubeker, as he turned away.

More practical than the prince, the dervish brought jugglers and serpent-charmers to amuse her; but in vain were the most remarkable feats of these tricksters—the most wonderful of their class in the world—performed before her.

A little active Hindoo, from Meerut, balanced a cane on his nose; a small tree surmounted it, and thereon were perched forty tiny birds, which chirped or were silent, according to his order, and which he ultimately shot in succession by pellets like dried peas, emitted upward from a pipe placed between his teeth, and all the while he was traversing the garden walk on two rings or hoops of polished steel, each a yard in diameter.

He gave place to another, who kept eight balls of polished silver revolving in shining circles round his head and shoulders, with marvellous rapidity. Then in his further attempt to amuse —for gold was plentifully promised if they could make her laugh —he received from Polly's hand a little piece of white paper, which he dexterously fashioned into the form of a butterfly, and then by the waving of a palm branch, he made the mock insect alight on the edge of her fan, on the bough of a tree, on the petal of a flower, or wherever he wished.

Then came two brothers from Hydrabad, terrible fellows, who swallowed swords and bayonets, and vomited fire, which seemed also to issue from their nostrils and ears; others there were, who raised an orange tree, in full bearing, from a seed, in a vase of water, by simply clapping their hands, and who, on throwing an apparently solid cocoa-nut to a great height in the air, received it in falling, directly on their own caput, from whence the milk, as the shell split, flowed over their shoulders; and the last juggler performed that astonishing feat which is so familiar to the people of Madras—by balancing himself on a bamboo pole, thirty feet high, and wheeling round upon his stomach, with a velocity fearful to behold; but interest and curiosity, or the power of being

amused were alike dead in Polly now, and she looked wearily on, as one in a dream, or sometimes she closed her eyes.

Lastly came a serpent charmer, with a basket of snakes on his back, and a wooden pipe and brass lotah at his girdle—a wiry, lithe, and supple looking little fellow, wearing a red turban and cummerbund of the same colour, for he was the identical personage whom we have seen in the forest of Soonput, and elsewhere.

He lured the snakes from his basket as he played on his pipe, and made them dance and wriggle their green, golden, and purple folds round his neck, legs, and arms, while they opened their scarlet jaws, and made their hoods distend, and their wicked eyes protrude and flash, as they crested their heads above his turban—one of them being the now fangless Brahminee cobra, from which he had saved Lena Weston, when asleep.

During this performance Polly's apathy suddenly deserted her, and gave place to animation; her eyes sparkled, and a flush came over her cheek. She half-raised herself among the pillows on which she was propped, and beckoned the snake charmer, at whose neck she had detected an ornament attached to his rosary of rough brown beads.

It was the fragment of a regimental badge, with the Queen's cipher and the number '32' upon it.

"Oh, where did you get that?" she asked, eagerly.

"Eik sahib logue," replied the charmer.

"Where?"

"Hiding in wood."

"Where—oh where—what wood?"

He pointed to the north.

"What was his name—Harrower or Temple?"

"I not know—mem sahib with him—give me this," he added, showing a gold bracelet on his right wrist. "I save her from snake—dam Brahminee cobra—give drink from lotah, water of nuddee—faint—ill—better, ver much well—shabash! shabash!"

Polly uttered an exclamation of mingled hope and joy, and in doing so, her voice seemed strange to herself! She recognised the bracelet as one which was habitually worn by Lena, for it had been a birthday present from the doctor; and from this man, in his disjointed jargon, she gathered the story of the episode in the forest of Soonput, with nearly all its details, and deduced from it that Jack, strong, gallant, "big" Jack Harrower (as she used to call him) and one of her sisters—Lena, certainly—were together, and, so far as she knew, in safety!

He showed Polly the horrid Brahminee cobra, and the brass lotah from which the poor pale "mem sahib" had drank, and the vessel seemed precious in the girl's eyes. This man had saved her sister from death—from a poisonous serpent, and she cast towards him two or three of the purses of mohurs that lay near

her, as if she loathed the coins and would glady be rid of them.

"Brahma bless thee with the water of life!" cried the fellow, though a low caste Hindoo, as he hastily concealed the precious mohurs in his cummerbund. He took especial good care to say nothing about his subsequent proceedings, in conducting the armed rabble to the ruined tomb in the forest, and their pursuit of Lena and Harrower; but she could make out that through his friendly care and guidance they had found safe shelter in the house of the zemindar Kunoujee Lall.

"Oh that I was with them!" she exclaimed, with a gush of yearning, "I thank you for all this, my friend—from my inmost heart—from my very soul, I do!"

The wily serpent-charmer withdrew in possession of more gold than he had ever thought of handling, even in his wildest dreams of acquisition; but the exclamations of hope and joy now uttered by Polly speedily brought the prince to her side, and, in the fullness of her heart, the poor girl told him of the discovery she had made, and, under all the circumstances, a most unwary disclosure it proved to be.

Abubeker in good and well-chosen English expressed his extreme satisfaction, and went straightway in search of his brother, who was in the Dewan Khana, surrounded by a brilliant staff of sepoy officers, some in scarlet uniforms, others in glitteriug Asiatic dresses of silk and velvet, radiant with precious stones. Many powerful chiefs of Oude and Delhi were present, and there, too, were Baboo Bulli Sing, Mohammed Bukt Khan (a soubadar) then general of the artillery, and Colonel Pershad Sing, who seemed somewhat ill at ease.

Mogul was receiving reports of fresh revolts extending almost to the gates of Calcutta, of slaughters everywhere from Lahore to the Bay of Bengal; of newly arrived troops, and he was issuing orders for their camping, for the levy of contributions and so forth, but with a languid and indolent manuer that was but too apparent to all.

These royal brothers were so much alike in their sleepy and effete aspect, in their yellow or golden colour of skin, their curve of moustache and almond shape of eyes—eyes, alike cunning, cruel aud licentious—in their obesity and years, their bearing and even their attire—for they wore the same pattern of shawls, vests, and turbans—that a stranger might have had some difficulty in knowing which was Mogul and which Abubeker.

A brilliant flash sparkled in the eyes of the former, when the latter informed him, in a whisper, that the eldest daughter of Doctor Weston—the pale one with the dark eyes—was concealed in the house of the Zemindar Lall, she for whom he had searched all Delhi and offered in vain a hundred mohurs of gold!

It was in consequence of this information that the file of troopers under the naick, in the guidance of Gunga Rai, appeared in the night at the gate of the zemindar, and their return was impatiently awaited by Mogul, whose wrath on finding them arrive alone, and on hearing the subsequent intelligence brought by the fakir, was on the point of being very dangerous, as he was not in the habit of having his wishes thwarted, or his orders trifled with.

With his forehead bent before Mogul till it touched the floor of the Dewan Khana, the corporal timidly ventured to assure him, that with his two troopers he could have done nothing against the strong wall of Lall's fort, and the two pieces of cannon which were opposed to him.

"True—but instead of two troopers you should have taken twenty."

"Most high, I did but obey the orders of the Rissaldar," faltered the naick.

"Was it Kunoujee Lall who actually refused to deliver them up?" asked Mirza Mogul, who sat crook-legged on his royal chair, with his jewelled fingers resting on his knees, outspread, and twitching nervously with anger.

"No, most high," replied the soldier, quailing under his cruel and angry eyes.

"Who then?"

"His brother—late the soubadar-major of the 15th Bengal Infantry."

"And *he* refused, the unclean dog?"

"Absolutely."

"And since then they have escaped?"

"It would seem so, most high," said Baboo Sing coming forward to the intense relief of the trembling corporal, who thought perhaps that duty was easier done under the Feringhee officers after all; "the Hindoo fakir reports, that the white sahib of the 32nd Regiment, and a mem sahib, undoubtedly a daughter of the Padre Weston, disguised in Afghan dresses, and attended by the soubadar-major, left the fort before daybreak, all well mounted."

"For whence?"

"Jehangerabad, he believes."

"Disguised as Afghans, say you?"

"Yes, most high," replied Baboo, salaaming low, for there was a terrible frown in the face of Mogul; "and a zemindar of Oude, Nour-ad-deen Abraha al Ashram, on his way hither to join the army, passed three persons, answering to their description, in a wood near the Jumna. He had some suspicions, and would have tracked them, but the horse of one of his two followers was destroyed by a tiger, so they may have dangerous companions in their neighbourhood."

"Can this zemindar of Oude be trusted?"

"He is true as Damascus steel, most high; and none more than he resents the plan of the queen of the Feringhees to wed the chiefs of Oude to the widows of her dead Crimean infidels—a project which, as your highness knows, Azimoolah Khan and I—praised be the prophet!—discovered when at Stamboul last year, and which——"

"Enough! and those three fugitives have taken the way to Jehangerabad—shabash! they can easily be intercepted!"

"Already a havildar and twelve of the 3rd Light Infantry, have departed for that purpose, guided by one who overheard and saw their flight—the Fakir Gunga Rai."

"A filthy Hindoo dog!" muttered the prince.

"But most true to you and to our cause, most high," urged Baboo timidly.

"Well, well, so be it; we may as well use him as another—'tis our destiny. If overtaken, when shall the prisoners be here?"

"To-night—the lady——"

"If not disfigured or mutilated, goes straight to my zenana—peril of your heads, remember that."

"And the sahib?"

"As you please," yawned Mogul. "Give him to the people, and they will soon make an end of him."

"But there is the soubadar-major—he is a Hindoo."

"Take him at daybreak to the Nusseer Bastion and blow him from a twelve pound gun, as a warning to all recreant sepoys; and see that the whole of the 15th Regiment are present under arms."

"Shabash—on my head be it," replied Baboo as he salaamed and retired.

Then giving the dervish all the hairs that had been combed out of his royal beard that morning for interment in the earth (as like all Moslems, he had a profound veneration for his hirsute appendage) Mirza Mogul, with another capacious yawn, broke up the divan, and, with a slouching gait, withdrew to his zenana.

CHAPTER LIV.

TRUE TO HIS SALT.

WE left Lena, Harrower, and Bhowanee Lall closely pursued by the party which had been sent to intercept them on the road to Jehangerabad.

Not a moment was to be lost in effecting the passage of the stream, which was broad and deep, and roaring fiercely down between its banks of rock, over which some old palm-trees drooped, and where the thick impervious jhaw jungle was hanging.

So far as he was personally concerned, Harrower would not have shrunk from plunging in his horse; but for Lena to attempt to swim hers across, would be but to court instant destruction.

At a glance—a glance of agony—he saw the situation in all its details; the careering river, the impending rocks, the white foam-bells surging past, on the opposite bank, an old shattered tower of the Bheels, through two gaping windows of which, the yellow sunbeams shot aslant, giving the ruined fragment the aspect of a gigantic and grotesque head, with two eyes glaring down on them.

Behind were the galloping hoofs of horses and the yells of the pursuers, three of whom had far outridden the rest, and were close upon them now.

"To the right," cried Harrower, whose sharp eye detected a rope bridge across the stream—a mere rope by which a kind of basket was suspended; "to the right, and we may baffle them yet!"

It was more than two hundred yards lower down the stream, and where the banks were equally steep.

"Lena, our horses outstrip yours—take mine—take mine and leave me!" cried Harrower; "I'll meet these men on foot, and you must trust to the good soubadar-major."

"Never, Jack, never!" replied Lena, in a tone of anguish not unlike his own.

"God bless you for this devotion, my dear girl," said he, in a husky voice; "but while there is yet time, take mine, I implore you, and reach the bridge. Your horse will sink under you."

"On, on; don't stop, Jack—in the name of mercy, don't rein up."

"These scoundrels are gaining on us—do you hear—do you hear?" cried Harrower, in growing despair; "lash, lash that lumbering artillery brute, Lena! Quicker, for pity's sake—for my sake, if you can."

"Oh! Jack, I am almost sinking."

Lena rode in front; the soubadar-major was behind her, and Jack was in the rear of both, for the footway by the river was a mere narrow track, and could only be traversed with extreme difficulty.

"There is yet time, I hope—you must cross by the bridge, Lena—we by the stream, as best we may."

"By the bridge!" echoed Lena, as she saw the slender black line of rope running from rock to rock, appear between her and the sky.

"I shall empty a saddle or two if I can—by Heaven I shall!" exclaimed Harrower, who saw that the pursuit must be vigorously checked at all hazards now; "come, soubadar-major, let us face about—fire our pistols, and fall on sword in hand, in the smoke!"

"We shall perish—it is our kismet," said the half breathless Bohwanee Lall gloomily

"Let my fate be accomplished here, if God wills it; I care not if she only escape those dark bloodhounds; and yet—oh what may be her future! To the bridge, Lena, to the bridge and cross, while we cover the rear!"

A glow of heroism mingled with the rage that swelled in Jack's heart, as with clenched teeth and knitted brows, he wheeled his horse about.

"We are but two to a dozen," said Bhowanee Lall, as he shortened his reins and drew his sword.

"Well—the more danger, the more glory; however, as yet, we are but two to three, and here they come in Indian file."

In this order, succeeding each other, the three sowars came tearing at a gallop along the narrow path by the river, while their nine comrades, with horses completely blown to all appearance, were still at a distance, when Harrower rushed forward to meet them. The first and second were only a horse's length apart, and came on with flashing eyes, and features animated by fury and fanaticism, and to which, the trident of Vishnu, that each had painted just above his nose, lent an expression of grotesque ferocity.

Both fired a pistol each and then betook them to their swords.

By making his horse rear by a vigorous application of curb and spurs, both pistol shots were escaped by Harrower; one

bullet lodged in the neck, and another in the chest of the poor animal, causing it to plunge wildly; but Harrower's powerful arm soon controlled it, and goading and goring it on with the spurs, by a backhanded cut at one assailant, and a "point," given home at the second, he rid himself of both, and hurled them bleeding and gasping from their saddles, amid the jungle, from which the swarms of insects were rising in black and buzzing clouds.

His horse and that of the third sowar came crash against each other, for the path was so narrow that to pass was impossible.

He caught the uplifted sword of the trooper as it descended by a most successful ward, and ere it could be followed by a thrust, the blade of the soubadar-major was passed through the man's body with terrible force, and in a moment his saddle, too, was empty and his horse galloping away.

"To the bridge now—to the bridge!" cried Harrower, and in a few bounds of his staggering and dying horse brought him to where Lena, in her saddle, had witnessed, with a heart swollen by dread and anxiety, the brief conflict—the terrible scene of five men engaged in mortal conflict, and three lying now in the agonies of death.

Harrower's sword, his right hand and arm were covered with crimson stains, and there was, for a moment or two, such an expression as Lena had never seen in his face before.

The rope bridge was simply a strong line laid across the chasm through which the river rolled at its narrowest part, which was some thirty feet broad. The ends were secured to the root of a date palm on one side and to a strong stake on the other, and were passed over two tripods of wood about four feet from the ground, to prevent the rope from chafing on the rocks. A strong basket, or cradle on rollers, traversed it, and by means of this primitive flying bridge the ryots and farm people of the neighbourhood had been wont to pass and repass the river since the stone edifice had fallen down, and it was simply one of those contrivances by which an adventurous and rural people supply their wants through means that in more civilized districts would be deemed fool-hardy and needlessly daring.

Harrower, in silence, lifted Lena from her saddle, and placing her in the basket-seat, implored her in moving terms to preserve her presence of mind, to hold firm by her hands and arms to the rope, and then with something between a prayer and a farewell on his lips, he shot it by its rollers, with all the strength he could exert, along the swinging line, and far beyond the centre of the stream.

Lena, who had often seen similar bridges for crossing the Doab Canal near Delhi, had to do the rest for herself by urging

the cradle, which she could do with ease, as its rollers revolved freely, along the rope, on which, with an instinct gathering from the despair of her terrible situation, she pulled with her delicate hands, and while not daring to trust herself with a glance at the water which was surging past below, she swayed her body along until the other side was reached.

Then, no sooner had she touched the ground, than Harrower, who had again mounted, called something to her as an adieu, and with two cuts of his sword, slashed through the frail and primitive means of communication.

The rope fell plashing into the stream, and the cradle which had traversed it was in an instant swept away amid the foam.

"Harrower! Harrower!" she exclaimed, kneeling down with clasped hands on beholding this, "leave me not here—I wish to die with you!"

"My heart and soul are yours, Lena," he cried, transferring his sword for a moment to his bridle hand, and waving kisses to her; "and now, soubadar-major, once more to face or to fly from those accursed Pandies."

With horses blown, but still at a good pace, the havildar, the fakir, and the other troopers were coming on, and through the openings in the flowering shrubs, and between the great stems of the lofty date palms they could be seen now almost within pistol range, yelling and brandishing their swords in fierce impatience to avenge the fall of their comrades, and win the promised mohurs of Mogul.

"Chulo, bhai, chulo, bhai!"* they were shouting from time to time, as in their ardour one or other took the lead on passing his fellows.

Harrower, who had no desire to meet if he could avoid them, was now seen by Lena to turn his horse up the path by the side of the stream past where the three troopers in their silver-grey uniforms were lying amid the jungle grass, throwing up their hands from time to time in those agonies which they cared so little to inflict upon others; and crouching on her knees, she watched him with an intensity of feeling that seemed to turn her to the rigidity of stone.

As a Parthian adieu she saw him discharge both his pistols in quick succession at the advancing sowars, hook up his sword to his waist-belt, and with a whoop, like a cry in the hunting-field, plunge his bleeding horse into the stream at a place where the opposite bank was less steep and rocky.

The soubadar-major did the same, but his horse "turned a turtle" under him, and he had barely time to get his feet out of the stirrups, when bang—bang—bang—came a volley of carbines,

* Come on, brother—come on!

as the bank they had quitted was lined by the Light Dragoons, firing in quick succession. Their bullets tore up the water into tiny white spouts, or whistled sharply across the stream, and were flattened out in stars on the opposite rocks.

Lena saw Harrower's horse, after struggling in vain, endlong and broadside to the current alternately, finally sink beneath him, either with loss of blood, or because another bullet had struck it.

Next, she beheld the soubadar-major throw up his hands with a shrill cry and half leap out of the water, as a ball pierced him somewhere, inflicting a mortal wound.

"Oh, god of Terror," he exclaimed in Hindostanee; "Seva, god of Terror!"

There was another ringing volley of carbines; she saw Harrower make a similar sign, with a cry as of agony, or farewell, or despair, or of all these emotions combined, and sink beneath the surface, which was redly tinged with blood; and as the pale smoke of the discharge curled up through the gorse and jungle that fringed the rocks, and the feathery branches of the palms that drooped overhead, she saw the two bodies floating past with a swift and gliding motion.

That of the soubadar-major lay with the face downwards in the water, but Harrower was on his back, and as he was swept away head foremost, she could see his thick dark moustache, his beard now of many weeks' growth, the paleness of his complexion, as the uckroot dye was nearly all washed off by his immersion, and she could also see his curly hair floating in the stream.

One glance at all this, and the whole scene whirled round. She was on her knees; she heard the yell of triumph with which the double deaths were hailed, and heedless that perhaps they would take immediate means to cross and capture or destroy her, she fell from her kneeling position forward on her hands, then her head sunk on the turf, and there she lay, long insensible or incapable of thought or action.

* * * * *

Her last reflections as the sense of utter weakness and intense desolation passed over her, were like those of the "Stranger."

"'Oh, God—oh, God—there is another and a better world!' . . . . Ah, why did I ever love that man Rudkin—how think that I did so? What miserable and insane weakness made me false, even for a moment, to a heart so true and noble as this, that I have lost for ever! . . Poor Jaek—dear, dear Jack Harrower! And he died for me—he died for me!"

And so she lay there in a species of stupor, while the survivors of the detachment, in two parties, led by the havildar and the fakir, divided, one riding up the stream, and the other downwards, in search of a bridge or ford, by which they might cross and capture her.

They had probably some difficulty in discovering either, for nearly an hour elapsed, during which Lena saw and heard nothing, but the agile monkeys, who grinned and chattered, or swung by their tails from the branches overhead, and seemed as if they understood and mocked her misery; but she was alike oblivious of them, and of huge and horrible flying insects, the green bugs, which hovered about, and even nestled in her hair. These creatures do not bite, however, and are chiefly repulsive from their size, colour, and odour.

After a time, she began to wonder where all these sufferings and terrors were to end, and what fate had in store for her next; and her senses were compelled to rally, and her perceptions to quicken, when she heard footsteps approaching in haste, grating on the gravel, and the crashing twigs and branches, as they were impetuously torn aside.

Then with a scream of wonder, blending with a cry of mutual joy, she saw Harrower—Jack Harrower appear before her, alive and well, untouched and simply dripping wet.

Without a wound, he had only feigned death, as he hurriedly told her, to deceive the sepoys, and make them cease firing. He had succeeded in escaping them thus, but the poor soubadar-major had perished beyond a doubt, with three bullets in his body, a victim to Seva, the destroyer, but in the end, *true to his salt!*

CHAPTER LV

ONCE MORE IN THE WILDERNESS.

"OH, Harrower, where shall I find words to express my joy for your safety, and to thank you for saving me, and at such a frightful risk to yourself, too!" was the exclamation of Lena, as their hands were clasped in each other's at once.

"How am I to thank you for feeling all this interest and pity?" responded Harrower, with his eyes full of admiration, of ardour, and the hope which her present manner inspired; "you said you wished to—to die with me——"

"True; in the terror of that awful moment, perhaps I did," said she, withdrawing her hands and looking aside; "at such moments we cannot choose our words."

"And so, out of the fulness of the heart, the mouth will speak—is it so?"

"I don't know."

"Let us say no more of dying—would it not be better to *live* for me?" urged Harrower; "but come," he added, on seeing that her face clouded, and on remembering the line of conduct he had adopted, "we shall talk of all this at another time; those fellows are no doubt after you still, so we must be ready for them, and to quit this place besides."

Necessity and prudence rendered his revolver his first care, and while he rapidly cleaned and reloaded it, the unconcealed joy of Lena for his restoration to her, and for his perfect safety, made him feel intensely happy for the time.

There was then a singular brightness over Jack's features, for he had been front to front with great peril; he had well-nigh passed through the valley of the shadow, and all unsheathed by wound or scar, as he stood before her, his face seemed absolutely beautiful to Lena in its manliness; yet it was but the embrowned and well bearded visage of a sturdy Englishman.

There was a colour in his cheek, a depth of passion in his eyes of violet-blue, expressive of ardour, earnestness, generosity, and the most tender love. The ladies had often found a difficulty in determining the exact hue of Jack's searching eyes; some called them grey, while the others termed them blue, and girls whom he

neglected, to flirt with others, voted them plain green; but Lena, more correctly deemed them violet.

"If he would but ask me now, to love him again, I could not choose, but accept him," thought Lena, as she bent her eyes on the grass, with a heart full of many emotions, in which gratitude was certainly not the least.

But Jack, with all his great love for her, remembered the bitter mortification of the past, the vanished years, when he had relinquished his leave of absence, and returned almost heart-broken to India; and he had no intention of pressing his suit, as he had once done lately, and Lena's final words, as recorded in our fifteenth chapter, were still fresh in his memory.

"In a little valley near this," said he, "I observed a dense grove of beautiful trees, not far from a house that seems deserted, there we must remain concealed till night comes; and then we must seek for food and further shelter——"

"But where to find them, Harrower?"

"Where Heaven may direct us, Lena; for my own part, now that the soubadar-major is gone, I have not an idea of whereabouts we are, or of anything save that danger is ever near, and the future dim and obscure."

She sighed deeply as he took her hand, and led her from the bank of the river, urging her to a quicker pace, lest the pursuing cavalry should reappear.

"They bowled out the poor old soubadar-major, certainly; but we settled four of them in fine style—the scoundrels!"

"Oh, Harrower; don't speak of it," said Lena, shuddering.

"A deuced selfish party, is that old fellow, Kunoujee Lall."

"Perhaps he could not help it—he was compromising his family, with those terrible men in Delhi," urged Lena.

"I wonder what he will think when he hears of all this."

"He will sorrow for his brother's death, doubtless," said Lena, thinking of her own griefs.

"He'll smudge his elegant face with the trident of Vishnu, pray to his monkey-god and his four-armed idols, and then doze off comfortably with his hubble-bubble in his mouth," said Jack, who had few sympathies with the natives now.

"My poor friend, those soaking things will kill you!" exclaimed Lena, with deep concern, as she surveyed his Afghan dress, which clung to him.

"But I cannot take them off just now, Lena," he replied, smiling, "though I know that in India agues and so forth are the very devil; but the sun will soon dry them—and I have luckily a drop of something in my flask here."

Fortunately for Harrower he was a man of iron frame and matchless constitution, otherwise his ducking in the river might have proved a serious affair to him in such a climate.

"I thought my career was about to be finished in another fashion, after I got out of the water," said he.

"How, Harrower—by the cavalry?"

"They were still hovering about the right bank of the stream, looking for a place to cross, when I swam under some jungle that overhung the rocks on this side, and got safe footing, unseen. I had then to creep under a fragment of impending rock—an enormous mass of marble—and judge, Lena, of what I endured when I felt it *vibrate* above me! I lay still under the cold rock for a moment or two, scarcely daring to breathe, ere I ventured to move again. I was in terror of being bruised to death, or of being half crushed, and compelled to lie there, incapable of extricating myself; of being discovered by natives if I ventured to shout for aid; of being devoured when half or wholly dead, by alligators, or by wild animals, such as jackals, tigers, and hyænas; of being reduced then to an unburied skeleton! By Jove! my dear girl, in the vibration of a pulse, a pendulum—so rapid is thought—I lived the agony of a lifetime! Making a bold effort, I dragged myself through, and the moment I did so the impending mass of rock closed, hard and fast on that which lay below. I found myself safe and free, but in a little nuddee, or watercourse, along which I crept for a time, until I made my way back to you."

Without experiencing alarm, or being seen by any one, they reached the grove, or rather a little valley, indicated by Harrower. It was a lovely spot; its sides were clothed with the wild cotton-trees, which are first covered with crimson flowers, that fall off and leave a bursting pod, filled with snow-white down; and there, too, grew the tall tattoon, with its leaves of shining green, and its clustering fruit, like the olive, with a sweet kernel; and the umbrageous russa, a rich and beautiful tree, with flowers of crimson and yellow; while along the little secluded vale there flowed a rivulet, which shone like a silver thread, when the sunbeams, that poured in one broad flood of golden light along the vista, kissed its gurgling current.

It was evident that in the rainy season—there are only *three* in India, the hot, the cold, and the rainy—this place became a mere *jhil*, or morass.

In the distance shone the white marble dome of a temple, built by "Hindoo Stewart," an old General of the Company's service, a Scotsman, who had come to India so early in boyhood, that he had forgotten all about his kirk (as most of his countrymen do when out of Scotland), and even of Christianity, and betook him to the worship of Brahma, Vishnu, and Seva, saying his prayers among their believers, as many an old Bengal officer may remember, content, as he was born without caste, to begin in the next world at the lowest grade.

Harrower found a pleasaut place for Lena, where they might sit completely hidden among the embowering foliage, and talk over their plans, while the sun drew westward, and evening approached.

In their disguises, he was not without a hope of achieviug their original purpose, by reaching the Ganges, getting on board a boat by force, fraud, or bribery—how, he cared not—and then dropping down with the stream to some British station, to which they could never travel by land at present; but in the first place food and sustenance were required, for the keruels of the tattoon, a few of which he had gathered for Lena, formed but an indifferent meal.

Remembering what had occurred when on a similar errand he had left her once before, he was loth to run the risk of visiting the deserted house he had seen close by; but if the essay was to be made, he knew that it must be attempted ere darkness fell, for he had seen many vultures hovering about the spot, and shrewdly suspected how and why the mansion, evidently the property of some wealthy indigo-factor, was empty and abandoned now.

It was distant less than a mile from the valley, so, leaving Lena his pistol as a protection, and taking with him only his sword, he departed on his errand of discovery.

It was a square, two-storied, and white-plastered villa, surrounded by a broad verandah, supported by handsome pillars of cedar wood; between these were the mattings, usually hung for coolness, to be soused with water by the chuprasseys, from pipkins of clay; but they were all in rags aud fritters now, and waved mournfully to and fro on the wind. The approach was through a gate, in a dense, prickly-pear hedge; but the former lay unhinged on the walk, which passed through a beautiful garden, where the most gorgeous flowers of India were blooming in all their beauty, but unheeded and untended now.

The windows were open aud gaping, the glasses smashed, and the green Venetian blinds knocked to pieces, so Harrower entered with an aching heart, for though the house seemed to have been "looted," and half demolished, but a short time before, already its chambers had become nests of centipedes, scorpions, and even vultures, which sailed slowly out and in at every opening. Everywhere the great spiders had been busy, for a week or two had evidently made terrible desolatiou.

On the consoles the gilded clocks were standiug still; on the tables the flowers had withered and decayed in their vases; gloves, bonnets, and toru female dresses, were strewed about, with photographs, engravings, English books, "The Railway Library," and leaves of music, that fluttered in the winds of Heaven, as they careered through the open and deserted mansion—deserted by all save the dead, whose remains were lying on the floor of a

room in a ghastly heap, as Harrower could see when he passed it, with a shudder of rage and hatred, for there the bayonet and the terrible tulwar had been at work, and in one hecatomb all seemed to have perished together.

In one room, on the floor, overturned, lay a pretty little berceaunette, with its white muslin drapery and lace canopy, tiny and delicate as a marriage bonnet; but stained and bloody. Near it lay a baby's shoe, of red morocco, and a coral rattle; but where was the baby, and where was its mother?

What hopes, and fears, and tears of joy, had been inspired by the idol of that little shrine, that was empty and blood-stained now!

There was a hoarse malediction, mingled with a vow, on Harrower's lips, as he struck the point of his sword into the floor and turned away. Had he looked from the window, he might have seen the remains of a white woman tied by ropes to one of the orange trees in the garden, with the vultures flying around her; but luckily this revolting feature was spared him.

It was near this house that the mutineers from Paniput had marched en route for Delhi. They were chiefly Mohammedan cavalry, and it was by people of their faith that the greatest outrages were committed, and that the Christian women were most barbarously used, during the great mutiny.

Harrower felt his heart sicken as he found himself in what had once, doubtless, been a happy English home, reduced now to an Indian charnel-house. Once he thought of hastily quitting it, but he had so long been face to face with this kind of work, and remembering the pressing necessity which brought him there—and that Lena was starving on his hands—that he made his way by chance, rather than instinct, to what had been the larder or pantry of the Khansamah (or butler), but the sepoys had been there before him, and its contents had nearly all become *loot* or were wantonly strewed about.

There, however, he was lucky enough to procure some coffee, and the sugar that is extracted from the palmyra and cocoa-nut tree; a few biscuits, or hard and dry chupatties, and a small ham, which the fine religious scruples of the plunderers had prevented them from touching as unclean; he also found a bottle of wine, and a small tin vessel, all of which he tied up in a handkerchief, and then hastened from the house, with something of compunction in his heart, as if he had been robbing the dead; but the living required all his care, and households such as that he had shudderingly quitted, were scattered then by thousands over all Bengal!

"Here are riches—here are the spoils of war," said he, cheerily, on rejoining Lena, to whom he only imparted the half of what he had seen; but he had regained the sheltering grove just in time,

for a few minutes after, the light grey jackets of the 3rd Cavalry were visible, as the havildar's party, on their homeward way, filed past the end of the valley, leisurely, at a trot—their search after Lena having proved fruitless. Their swords were sheathed now, and their carbines were slung. Some Hindoo peasants, returning from the fields with their bullocks, which they use when ploughing, harrowing, or threshing, also passed leisurely on their way to rest, so his escape from being seen was a narrow one.

The wanderers were still in that woody and unfrequented district which lies north-west of Delhi, stretching away for miles upon miles of wilderness and leafy waste—the forest of Soonput Jheend. With his fantastic clothing dry, his weapons ready, and nearly as much provision as he could carry, Harrower felt that his spirit would have become more buoyant, and that he might have been able to achieve much for himself had he been alone, and Lena in a place of safety; but now he had again to tremble, lest an illness, consequent to the dews of the Indian nights, might fall upon her.

He became very silent, and full of thought.

"Why so sad?" she asked, kindly touching his arm.

"I was only thinking," said he, with affected cheerfulness, "that after a little more of this savage wandering, we shall be fully qualified to appreciate the domestic life of the Zulu Kaffirs, or of the Feejee Islanders."

Lena was about to reply, when a sound arrested her, and made Harrower spring to his feet. Another sound followed, and he laid a hand on his sword. The first was the sharp twang of a cavalry trumpet; the second was the barking, or rather the hoarse baying of a dog.

"Can they be on our trail, and tracking us with dogs?" was Jack's first alarming thought; if so, there was no time to lose, for the baying was on their side of the river, and also near the rivulet that traversed the beautiful little valley.

"Up, Lena—up—we must be off, my poor friend—my dear girl—exert yourself again!" he exclaimed, as the voice of the dog and the trumpet sound were heard again, and most alarmingly near. Then taking her hand, he led her down the slope, and over the rivulet, crossing and re-crossing it several times, to baffle the scent of the hound, if they were indeed followed by one.

The sun had set with its usual Indian rapidity; day had suddenly given place to night, and the clear round moon, like a mighty pearl set in blue enamel, shone on the far extent of flat landscape, but nothing to cause further alarm was visible; and, after a time, the sounds they heard died gradually away.

Harrower afterwards discovered that they were caused by a body of revolted cavalry, on their way from Scharunpore to Delhi, whose trumpet had been sounding to recall plundering

stragglers; but so great were his alarm and anxiety lest they were actually being tracked by the party under the havildar and the Fakir Gunga Rai, that he continued to follow an old and narrow path which led up the left bank of the rivulet, half supporting and half dragging his faint and weary companion, for three or four miles, nor did he stop until they found themselves once more amid what was unquestionably the utter solitude of a portion of the forest of Soonput, and only some thirty miles or so nearer the Ganges than when in their former place of concealment, the old tomb where the Shere Afghan and the father of Nour Mahal lie.

CHAPTER LVI.

A SHELTER.

A LITTLE of the wine found in the desolate villa, restored Lena's wasted streugth, and they continued to proceed in the hope of finding a banian or some other great tree, for shelter from the heavily falling dew. If disposed to loiter, sounds in the wood, like human voices rather than those of wild animals, urged them wearily on from place to place, along their uncertain track, for there a meeting with men would be as perilous and unwelcome as with the beasts of the forest.

There was much that was strange, wild, and fantastic in their being cast thus together, day after day, these two lovers, who had been parted by evil iufluences, and who, though re-united, were not yet reconciled; and but for the great heroism, the gentle and brotherly kindness of Jack Harrower, it might have proved a very awkward situation for Lena; but they were as the two last survivors of a shipwreck, clinging to the same spar, or floating on the same raft, at the mercy of Fate, the waves, and the wind.

Jack saw nothing romantic in their position, for there was nothing of romance in his nature; he was thoroughly practical, and, as he stumbled on through the long jungle-grass, he sighed—as

only an inveterate smoker can sigh—for a single cheeroot, or for his favourite meerschaum (a pipe from Lippe Detmold, the bowl of which he had been browning to his own satisfaction) and for the ample bag of cavendish, which had been in his bungalow when his effects were confiscated by that estimable valet, Ferukh Pandy.

"I wonder," he thought, "if I shall ever have the pleasure of punishing that rascal."

In its rank luxuriance, the wavy and feathery jungle-grass was so long that in some places it might have hidden an elephant; but they were pursuing (without guide or object, save a dry shelter) a kind of beaten track through it, whether made by the feet of men or wild animals there was no possibility of determining, and on both sides the grass stretched like a green and reedy sea, beneath the intertwined branches of the enormous trees.

"No wild boars here, I hope!" said Harrower, "I've had many a pleasant day's pig-sticking; but to meet a boar here now—"

"Don't even think of such a thing," said Lena in an imploring voice; "but what sound is that?"

"Something most unpleasantly like a human voice," replied Harrower in a low tone, while pausing, and with knitted brows looking round him anxiously.

"If so, it comes from a great distance," said Lena, sinking her voice to a whisper.

"Surely those devils of the 3rd Cavalry have relinquished their search—besides, horses would make but little way here."

Athwart the forest glades, the moonlight poured in bright streams of pure and liquid light, and the dew gemmed everything with diamond lustre. Monkeys, black and brown, were leaping from branch to branch; wild peacocks and other birds of brilliant plumage, roused from their nests by the appearance of the wanderers amid that utter solitude, winged their way through the overarching foliage, with a swiftly gliding, or a heavily flapping sound, according to the size and fashion of their pinions.

As they proceeded, the wood became more open, and then Lena grasped Harrower's arm with both hands, exclaiming,—

"See—yonder is a wild elephant—nay, there are two!"

Standing amid the grass, which was barely two feet high in that place, they saw distinctly two large dark elephants, with their heads turned towards each other, but quite motionless, with their long trunks and flat pendulous ears hanging down.

Harrower uttered a loud hunting shout, which the forest repeated with a hundred echoes; it was done by a sudden or uncontrollable impulse, and was most impolitic, as he knew not whose ears it might reach; but it seemed to alarm only the monkeys, who scrambled about with increased celerity, while the

birds fled from tree to tree. However, the giant quadrupeds never stirred, and another glance on a nearer approach showed that they were hewn of stone!

And now a second, a third, a fourth, and many more appeared in succession, ranked in a double line, about twenty feet apart, with their heads turned inward. In short, they were an alley, an avenue of stone elephants, all alike in size and carving, forming the approach to the ruined Hindoo temple of Soonput Jheend, the quaint and lofty entrance to which was looming dark and huge at the extreme end of this great vista of statues.

Athwart those vast and solemn figures that stood so still, so terribly silent amid the solitude, the light of the Indian moon was streaming in all its silver splendour; one half of each elephant was clearly defined in the sheen, the other was rounded off into shadow, and shrouded in obscurity.

"How beautiful—how magnificent!" exclaimed Harrower, breaking a silence that was oppressive, for though not romantic, he had somewhat of an artist's eye, and could handle his pencil well.

"Magnificent truly," added Lena in a low voice, while still drooping on his arm; "but how solemn, Jack—how awful and solemn!"

And something there was indeed solemn, touching and humbling, even terrifying to the heart, in the vastness of these ruined works of art—the mighty temple of a past time—the great effort of human pride and fanatical enthusiasm, the scene for ages of a thousand dark and barbarous rites, standing there amid the solitude of the vast Indian forest, forgotten and, though decaying, yet apparently imperishable as the rock-hewn shrines of Ellora or Elephanta.

Such remains are scattered over all that wondrous land. "History is altogether, and fable almost silent as to the authors of those works of taste and magnificence," says a writer; "they are forgotten, and the memory of the arts which they practised has perished with them. The monuments they have left now adorn a desert, which nature, as if in scorn of man, seems to pride herself in decking with joy, by the colours and fresh odours of every delightful shrub and flower, whose Author can never be mistaken."

A light cloud covered the bright moon, involving this singular avenue in complete shadow; the brightness of the forest was dimmed, and a gloom spread over its vistas. For a time Lena would not advance, even though the dew was becoming most oppressive; but anon the cloud passed away, the moon came forth again in all her glory to light this place of wonder, and that double row of stony phantoms, the huge backs of which were shining with the moisture that dripped from every herb and tree.

Lena was almost sinking now, when Harrower conveyed her into the ruined temple, discharging a chamber of his revolver as he did so, to scare forth any wild animals whose lair it might be.

A tremendous echo replied.

Ere its many reverberations from the recesses of the edifice died away, there was a rushing sound, and a tempest seemed to pass them, as scores of birds, whose nests were in the carvings of the cornices and capitals, fled, with strange cries and outspread wings into the forest.

Up several steps, broken, decayed, and covered with grass and herbage, and between pillars of twisted, bulbous, and fantastic form, they passed, Harrower leading the shrinking Lena by the hand, until he found a stone or fallen column, on which he seated her, while preparing to make a fire, that they might look around them and see the features of their temporary habitation—the vast memorial of unknown ages, and of a mental darkness that is yet undispelled in the land.

Dried branches, dead leaves, and so forth, were lying there literally in cart-loads, just as the forest winds had blown them in. A heap was soon collected apart from the rest: a cartridge was then untwisted, and the powder spread over it. Another discharge of the revolver, and the fuel was fired; it sprang up in wavering flames, and Harrower continued to throw on heap after heap, till the ascending blaze lighted up the whole place, round which he looked with growing interest and Lena with unconquerable fear.

This temple—one of the many magnificent Hindoo fanes, rifled and ruined by Mohammed Ghora during his conquests in the twelfth century—is of vast extent and height, and out of the ghostly uncertainties of its depths and shadows, there could be seen coming forth in bold relief, while the light of the fire wavered and brightened redly on them, several pillars of bulbous outline, with flat oval capitals, and many gigantic stone figures, whose heads supported the roof: and when the unsteady glow played on their huge and grotesque faces, these seemed to become animated, and to grin, mock, and jabber at the intruders; yet the whole scene, in all its details, its bold features, its black obscurities, and unknown history, was calculated to impress the mind with awe.

Even practical Jack Harrower felt its solemn influence stealing over him; but that did not prevent him from perceiving, that in a recessed part of the edifice was an inner gallery, supported by a row of smaller pillars about eight feet high. To this place a series of ledges, or steps, gave access, and therein he placed Lena, on a couch of dry soft leaves, as being more secluded than the outer temple, where he heaped more fuel on the fire, and then

seated himself near her, on the ledge of stone, a few feet below her impromptu couch.

She was reclining with her left hand under her cheek; she stretched out her right to him, and he pressed its soft fingers between his own in silence, and thus they sat for a long space hand in hand, looking sometimes at each other, and sometimes at the fire which burned brightly on the paved floor; at the quaint pillars, at the quainter figures of the Hindoo idols, hewn out of marble or porphyry, on which daubings of red paint were still traceable; at the symbols on the walls, where the bull of Brahma, the serpent of Seva, the trident of Vishnu, and the noose of Kalee, were reproduced in innumerable carvings: and then they turned to where, away beyond the outer peristyle, in the moonlight which seemed so pale, and cold, and blue, when contrasted with the red, glowing fire in the foreground, they could see the dark and sombre avenue of stone elephants, and the glorious vista of the forest, receding into distance and a silvery obscurity, far, far away.

The scene was one of wondrous grandeur and picturesque beauty—of silence and solemnity, and so much was Lena oppressed by a sense of it, and by all she had undergone, that while the clasp of her soft and trembling hand tightened in that of Harrower, she began to sob heavily, and covered her pale face with her veil and sleeve.

CHAPTER LVII.

RECONCILIATION.

"LENA," said Harrower, tenderly, while placing an arm over, but not around her, and then quickly withdrawing it, "why do you weep so?"

"I don't know, Jack."

"Not know, Lena? After holding up so bravely, until we have found a safe shelter—"

"Unless it be, that I am thinking of Delhi, of Meerut, and those who have perished there and elsewhere in this horrible country."

"Be calm—you have borne up with genuine spirit—you have shown the courage and prudence of a perfect heroine, Lena, so do not give way now—but continue to be the brave girl you have been."

"I shall try, Jack—we have certainly been spared through many, many perils; have we not?"

"Such as I never thought to encounter, or survive, in my wildest ideas of military service, or most fantastic visions of adventure when a schoolboy at Rugby—perils too, that I never could have thought, once on a time, to have shared with you, Lena."

"Oh, Jack," said she, after a pause, in a low and tremulous voice, and evidently making a great effort with herself; "Jack, I loved you once—you believe me, don't you?"

"Yes," replied Harrower, in a husky tone, becoming a little bewildered by the sudden turn the conversation was taking, "once, certainly, Lena Weston."

"Yes—before that man came between us, and I acted like a silly coquette—an idiot girl; but be assured that I never loved you then, dear, dear Jack, so sincerely as I love you—*now!*"

"Lena—Lena Weston!" he exclaimed, as he threw an arm round her, and bent his face close to hers; "is this avowal true—am I to be rewarded at last?"

She placed a hand caressingly on his neck, and touched his cheek tenderly with her trembling lips.

"I love you, Jack—forgive me, and I shall never err again."

All her heart had gone forth to him at last, and Harrower covered her face and hands with kisses.

And now there welled up in their hearts, all the more keenly, isolated and lonely as they were, and apart from all the world they had hitherto known—this wealth of passion, this subtle yearning that had been growing in Lena's soul, and which Harrower's had never lost, for he, the blunt Cornish squire and practical soldier, had ever loved her with the devotion of a knight of chivalry.

It was their old love of the pleasant days at Thorpe Audley, but changed into something more devoted, with more of stern reality combined with its romance, than at one time they could have understood.

A long but delicious pause ensued, during which he sat on one of the steps below the gallery, with her hand clasped in his, and still laid caressingly over his neck and shoulder.

"Then, dearest Lena," said Harrower, "you will be mine after all—mine, after all these miseries and perils are past?"

"Shall they ever pass?" she asked sadly.

"They must—they shall!" was the emphatic reply.

"But we may not survive them."

"We shall—please God—we shall; but say you will be mine—whisper it in my ear, be it ever so low, Lena. There, my beloved; lay your head upon my shoulder, as of old, in the happy times at Thorpe Audley—in the deep, shady English lanes, in the church porch, and by the trysting stile. Oh! Lena, Lena, turn your sweet face to mine, and repeat that you love me again, as you loved me then—then, in the dear old days at home!"

"What more would you have me say—what more than I have said?" she asked in an imploring tone.

"True—I am unreasonable."

"I know that your heart never, in thought or deed, wandered from me; and left so much alone as I have been of late, ample time has been given me for reflection; thus I resolved to avow what you, I fear, would never say to me again, three simple words, that tell—*I love you*. I am yours, Harrower—my dear old Jack, yours only, and for ever!" she whispered through a burst of tears, with her pale face, slightly flushing now, though it was hidden in his neck.

So at last the truce was ended; again he was hers, and she was his!

These three words expressed the sum of all their happiness, and yet neither could tell where or how, whether even in life or in death, the morrow's sun might find them, for they were still fugitives, fleeing for their existence; so circumstances shed much of anxiety and solemnity over the joy of their complete reconciliation.

Lonely and blighted now, the last of all her race and family—as she deemed herself, she clung all the more tenderly and

helplessly to Harrower, her kind, loving, and forgiving Jack Harrower.

Of the hopes and fears that were passed, and of those which were to come, they conversed long that night; but Colonel Rudkin's name was never mentioned. That portion of the last few years, in which he had figured, was tacitly committed to oblivion.

Harrower frequently replenished the fire, and after a time, Lena, notwithstanding that her mind was so full of thought, overcome by weariness, dropped asleep, while he sat watchful and anxiously on guard, with his arms beside him—it seemed that now, he had, if possible, a greater treasure than ever in his keeping.

So passed the night.

Harrower procured in the forest—close by the entrance of the temple—some mangoes, the rich juice and substance of which, formed a pleasant morning repast in so hot a clime, and plantains also were to be had in any quantity, for the mere trouble of gathering them.

With the thermometer at 110°, the atmosphere of the vast temple was cool and pleasant; and therein, they were safer than they really knew of, as it was a place that none went near, being one of those spots said now, by the superstitious Hindoos, to be the abode of the mysterious *yogis*, a kind of fakirs, who are supposed to live in the caves of the mountains, or in solitary ruins, without food or raiment, and in a state of abstraction from the entire world, for hundreds of years.

Desolate and desperate though their fortune, in some respects, to Lena and Harrower,

"The situation had its charm."

for a term, but a brief term only, for on the second day of their lingering there, the sound of human voices was heard most unpleasantly near their lurking place—so near that they retired into the darker recesses of the gallery, which opened along the back, or inner wall of the temple, affording complete concealment behind the great pillars and caryatides, or huge statues, the heads of which we have said upheld the roof.

Such a successful termination to his love affair, after all its changes and turns, Jack Harrower could not at one time have foreseen. They had parted in sorrow and anger, with tears and reproaches, in a sequestered green lane, near the quaint old Rectory of Thorpe Audley—parted, as they thought, never to meet again—when the autumn leaves were lying thick under

hedge and tree; and now they were reunited, lip to lip, hand in hand—but where?

In a Hindoo temple of Bengal—far, far away, amid the savage wilderness of Soonput Jheend!

So he had not only won back Lena Weston, but had re-won her with a love, by many degrees more intensified than the first passion of her girlhood at Thorpe Audley.

That he had done so, was his constant and exultant thought; but would he yet be able to save her? Would they yet be spared to each other, in a land where so many were daily perishing?

A whole day he spent in calculating, or considering, as closely as he could remember it, the line of flight proposed by Bhowanee Lall towards the Ganges; but when he contemplated the distance to be travelled by Lena, without a horse, a palanquin, or other means of easy conveyance, his heart sank completely, and he knew not whether to turn, or what to do! "If it be true that without some enthusiasm nothing great was ever achieved, and nothing permanent ever fulfilled," what greater causes for it could a man have, than those which now inspired Jack Harrower? The honour, the liberty, and the life of his promised wife—the love of his youth!

During that day no voices were heard in the forest, but it did not pass without a petty alarm, for the sound as of some person breathing heavily—snoring, in fact—was heard very audibly; but where, Harrower could by no means discover.

Then a stone, which became detached from a portion of the gallery or recess, fell heavily down, almost at his feet, after which all became still as before.

CHAPTER LVIII.

HARROWER'S STORY.

PERCEIVING that these two unaccounted-for incidents greatly disturbed Lena, and served, together with the gloomy aspect of the place, its vastness, fantastic carvings, and repulsive figures, to render her nervous and terrified, he endeavoured to amuse her by adopting a lively style of conversation, and even by relating anecdotes—though story-telling was not much in Jack's way.

"This remarkable temple," said he, "reminds me of a painting I have at home, of one in which my grandfather, when he served in the Carnatic under General Stuart, discovered a French sergeant almost dying of wounds and the consequent loss of blood, but whose life he saved; and who in future years became a king—what do you think of that, Lena?—the king of one of the first countries in Europe!"

"Is it history or romance, this, Harrower—a story you are inventing to amuse me?" asked Lena, smiling faintly from the couch of leaves on which she was reclining, for now she was almost past being interested by anything.

"Actual history, I assure you."

"But how did it all come about, Jack?"

"Thus, as I shall tell you," said he, retaining her hand in his, and seating himself, as before, on the steps that led to the pillared recess, where she reclined. "It was in the June of 1783, when the French troops, under the Marquis de Bussey, made a vigorous attack on ours, then commanded by General Stuart, on whom the duty of leader had devolved after the death of Sir Eyre Coote.

"Stuart had taken up a position to the south of Cuddalore, a town near the Bay of Bengal, and though the treaty of peace had been signed between the two countries, there were then no P. and O. liners on the Red Sea, no telegraph wires, no steamers from Marseilles to Cairo, so the stout old Scotsman knew nothing about it for months after, and at the head of his kilted Highlanders, his Madras Infantry, and camel-batteries, he pressed the siege of the fort with such vigour, that he soon killed six hundred of its defenders.

"The brave de Bussey—the representative of one of the finest old families in France, and of that Louis de Bussey d'Amboise, who figures in the history of Marguerite of Valois—failed to raise the siege, and suffered heavy losses.

"My grandfather, then Major Harrower, served on the immediate staff of Colonel Wangenheim, who commanded the Hanoverians, and they had both remarked a young sergeant of the French 54th, or Royal Marine Regiment, who distinguished himself by repeated acts of bravery, as the troops of the Marquis de Bussey fell back in disorder. Driven at last, with a handful of men, into a Hindoo temple, the party defended themselves against Highlanders and Hanoverians till they were all shot down or bayonetted, including the young sergeant, whose white uniform was stained with the blood of many wounds. But Major Harrower saved his life with extreme difficulty, and being a powerful man—all we Cornish Harrowers have been big fellows, Lena—he bore him forth into the outer air.

"'Your name, my brave lad?' asked Colonel Wagenheim.

"'Jean—Baptiste—Jules—' was all he could falter out, when he fainted.

"But so much were the Major and Colonel interested by his manner and appearance, that they ordered him to be conveyed to their own quarters, where he was treated with every care and consideration, until his wounds were completely healed.

"The young sergeant informed them that he was a Bearnese, a native of Pau; that he was well educated, and had been intended by his parents for the study of the law; that his mother's fondest ambition and hope were to see him a Councillor of the Parliament of Paris; but in boyhood he had heard too many warlike stories of his countrymen, Gaston de Foix and Henri IV., under the shadow of whose castle he had been born, so preferring the more perilous career of a soldier, in his sixteenth year he had enlisted in the Regiment of the Marines, and that in nine years time he had been promoted to the rank of sergeant.

"'I shall never forget the debt of gratitude I owe to you, Monsieur le Colonel, and also to you, Monsieur le Major,' said he, as he bade them adieu, with tears in his eyes, and a little bundle slung over his shoulder, at the end of a stick, 'and I shall teach my mother at home in France, to remember you both in her prayers. Happily, messieurs, our nations are now at peace, but it may yet be in my power to repay, in some manner, to a poor countryman of yours, the great kindness you have bestowed upon me—Sergeant Jean Baptiste, of the Marines of King Louis."

"Years afterwards, when my grandfather had turned his sword, not into a ploughshare, but into a heavy shanked hunting-whip, and, retiring from the service, had settled down into an old fox-hunting, Cornish squire, he read how in June, 1803, the French

invading army, under the great General Bernadotte, had marched into Hanover, when George III. refused to recognize the neutrality of the German States, and that among those who attended the levee of the conqueror was his Indian comrade, General Wangenheim, then an aged officer, venerable by years, by wounds, and service, his breast covered with the stars and medals of many a memorable field.

"The French General received the veteran with great distinction, shook him repeatedly by the hand, and observed him with marked attention.

"'Monsieur le Général,' said he, with kindly interest; 'you have served a great deal, I believe?'

"'I have served his Majesty the king of Great Britain and Hanover, for more than half a century.'

"'And in India, I have heard?'

"'Yes, monsieur,' replied the fine old German officer, modestly; 'I have served there—but that is more than twenty years ago now!'

"'You were at the siege of Cuddalore, in the Carnatic?'

"'I had the honour,' replied Wangenheim, with growing surprise.

"'Have you any recollection of a French sergeant whom you and another officer saved from the bayonets of the Scotch Highlanders, in a Hindoo temple, and whom you took under your protection, on the retreat of the Marquis de Bussey, from the heights southward of the city?'

"'Yes, Monsieur le Général—a sergeant of the Royal Marines of the late King Louis. I do remember him—a brave young fellow he was, but of course I never heard of him more.'

"'That sergeant has now the honour to address you—I am he—and I beg to testify, before all these gentlemen, how much I shall rejoice if I can in any mode repay the humanity and kindness you bestowed upon me, during our campaign in the Carnatic.'

"'You, General—you that sergeant—Jean—I remember now: Jean Baptiste—'

"'Jean Baptiste Jules Bernadette, the runaway boy from the mountains of Bearn. When taken prisoner, I had been too weak probably to mention all my name. At the Revolution the Marines made me their colonel.* You shall dine with me to-day, General, and learn from me, how we, the children of the Great Republic, may spring in a short year—yes, even in a month, from the private's musket to the marshal's baton!'

"General Wangenheim was caressed by Bernadotte, and re-

* On this taking place, Bernadotte's first act was to set at liberty all the Royalist officers of the Regiment, and restore to them their swords and crosses of St. Louis.

ceived every mark of favour and honour he could bestow upon him while the French troops were in Hanover, and before the veteran was borne to his last home in the church of Neustadt, he had lived to see the young sergeant of Marines created the Marshal Prince of Ponte Corvo and King of Sweden and Norway on the abdication of Gustavus IV.

"And now, Lena, for tiffin," added Jack, with a smile, as he concluded, and went to that part of the edifice where he had placed the provisions; "a drop of the Cabul wine, and a biscuit."

He paused in a bewilderment that was very pardonable, for both the wine-bottle and the chupatties had mysteriously disappeared in the night!

CHAPTER LIX.

WHERE THE WINE AND CHUPATTIES WENT.

ALARM and surprise—utter astonishment, indeed—were the emotions that mingled in Harrower's mind on discovering this singular abstraction.

He had never gone further from the temple than down the avenue of statues to reconnoitre, or to gather a few mangoes, so no one could have approached the place or entered it unseen by him or by Lena.

The foot-print discovered by Robinson Crusoe in the sand of his lonely island did not create more alarm in the mind of that celebrated navigator, than did the disappearance of their viands in the hearts of the two fugitives.

"Musk rats may have taken the chupatties," suggested Lena, with a tremulous lip and a very pale face.

"But not the bottle of wine," he replied; "a biped of some kind must have taken a fancy to it."

"Can one of those huge adjutant-birds have stolen it unperceived by us?" said Lena, pointing to the *argils*, those great and ravenous herons (so venerated by the Brahmins) which were

now perched in numbers on the stone elephants outside the peristyle.

"I have heard of *other* adjutants who were fond enough of wine Lena, but the idea is quite impossible of execution—alarmingly so. We have certainly had a visitor."

"It must have been an invisible one."

"No, Lena; ghosts don't steal wine."

"But when or how could any one have entered here?" she asked, looking fearfully round.

"That I am utterly at a loss to determine; but when I remember the voices heard in the forest from time to time—the stone that fell so oddly—but hush! what is that?"

He laid a finger on his lip as if to impose silence on himself, and a dark frown gathered on his fine expressive face, as he drew his revolver from its case and cocked it, for a sound that seemed to come from the gallery, or open recess at the back of the temple, struck his ear.

It was exactly like that which is caused by a match being drawn sharply on a stone or other rough surface for the purpose of ignition, and a gleam of light for an instant came out of the darkness of the very gallery where he had made up a couch of leaves for Lena.

She, too, had heard the sound and seen the light, and shrunk close to his side.

"I'll be hanged if there is not some mysterious party lurking in the back part of this place, and out I must hook them at all hazards," said Harrower, alike resolute and practical; "we can't protect our front unless we know how the rear is situated."

"God help us, Jack!" mourned Lena; "how long are we to endure terror upon terror—trouble after trouble?"

"How can it be otherwise, Lena, in a land where every man's hand, and every woman's too, is uplifted against us, and where the very children would rend us like hyænas if they could."

He pressed her hand, whispered a word or two to reassure her, and with his sword drawn and pistol cocked, he sprang into the gallery, and crept softly in the direction from whence the light had come.

Immediately behind a great and mutilated statue of Seva, from which the four arms were broken or had fallen off, a colossal figure the entire height of the temple, he found that an arched passage opened at a right angle from the gallery, and after various turnings (full of dust in some places, of leaves and accumulated soil in others) led into a kind of vault or chamber, where the sunlight shone cheerfully through a square opening or window. The place must have been an appendage of the temple, formed for purposes known only to the priests who had worshipped there ages before the days of Mohammed Ghora.

Harrower peeped in and saw with surprise a richly attired Indian—to all appearance a Zemindar of Delhi, seated on the floor, leisurely puffing a cigar, with the missing wine-bottle by his side, and his right hand resting on the neck of it, while he gazed contemplatively at the blue patch of sky that was visible through the aperture, which was so small and situated so high up in the wall, that he could not have found entrance by it in any way.

This personage was well armed; a brace of pistols and a dagger, all of exquisite workmanship, were in the Cashmere shawl which formed his girdle, and close at hand lay unsheathed a formidable tulwar, or broad-bladed Indian sabre. His blue cloth vest was elaborately embroidered with gold and beautiful needlework in bright coloured threads; precious stones were sparkling in his turban, and every way he seemed an Indian dandy, though powerfully yet handsomely made. His figure was lithe and active, and singularly enough, for a native, he was seated, not with his legs crooked under him, but stretched at full length, with all the air of a free and easy lounger. Harrower could see only the side of his dark face, which was of a deep yellow, the high class Indian colour, and that he had keen dark eyes, enormous black whiskers and a beard.

Still keeping his pistols cocked and ready to shoot down this most unwelcome Oriental with as little compunction as if he had been some obnoxious reptile, Harrower, to his great surprise, suddenly heard him exclaim, after a most capacious yawn—

"Oh, holy St. Bridget of Egypt, who was forty-one years in the wilderness without having even the smallest communication with mortal man, but here's a pretty piece of botheration! How am I to get away while these niggers are watching me there without? I wonder how many there may be; bedad! if I thought there were only the two—and this wine—the unbaptized blackguards!" he added, taking a long pull from the bottle; "it tastes like capital mess Madeira, Oh, murder and millia murder, but it's a poor case entirely! A rookawn of niggers, maybe, in that place beyond there, and I have only six charges of ammunition left, and a bad leg too—the devil's in it for sport, say I!"

Ere Harrower's astonishment and relief of mind permitted him to speak, the other resumed his musing——

"I think I could sing 'Aileen-a-Roon' to keep myself cheery, if those beastly fellows were only farther off, or would get out of that for good! Niggers, indeed!—and the creatures to be drinking wine like this. I wonder if they have any more of the same bin?"

And he sighed as he took what proved to be a final draught from the bottle, set it slowly down, and replaced his cigar between his teeth.

"Ahoy, my man—why who on earth are you?" asked Harrower, coming forward.

"Ah! what the devil's that?" cried the seeming Indian, with great sharpness, as he sprang agilely to his feet, sword and pistol in hand, and with extreme surprise surveyed Harrower, who almost laughed aloud, as he recognized an old friend.

"What, is it you, Doyle," he exclaimed, "Pat Morris Doyle, of the Bengal Fusiliers?"

"Hurrah!—the Lord be good to us! You are Europeans like myself—only disguised—"

"As you are, my friend," said Jack, shaking him warmly by the hand; "don't you recognize us?"

"The devil a bit!"

"You can't have forgotten us—Harrower, of the 32nd, and Miss Weston—poor Doctor Weston's daughter; we have been lurking in concealment since that horrible night of the retreat from Delhi."

Starting back, Doyle, who was a devout Catholic, was about to make the sign of the cross; but suddenly changing his mind, he grasped the speaker's hand, exclaiming—

"Harrower—so it is Jack Harrower, of the 32nd—a singular meeting this, old fellow! especially in this land, where there have been so many sad partings. *Pater noster qui es in cælis*, but here's a pleasant surprise! You and Miss Weston in the wild woods together, like a couple of Nebuchadnezzars—it's mighty droll, any way!"

"Droll? It is enough to fill us with despair, Mr. Doyle," said Lena, as she presented her hand.

"How did you recognize me in this dress, and with a visage dyed 'dark with the luminous bronze of a southern clime'—artistically-used tobacco-juice?"

"Doyle, I would recognize you among a thousand, by those wild Irish eyes, and that splendid brogue of yours. You would make a capital Othello as you look just now. Do you remember my 'make-up' for our amateur theatricals, at Allahabad?"

"And you and Miss Weston in those long dresses—I don't know what you look like, unless it be Aladdin and the beautiful Princess of China; but such a gallant beard you have cultivated!"

"Thick as jungle, Pat."

"Yes—jhaw-jungle, decidedly," said Doyle, laughing. "Oh! by the Trout of Kilgavower! but this adventure beats Banagher; and so *you* were the two natives I was so frightened of? What a muff I have been—and I stole your wine—the Madeira, or whatever it was—"

"*Was?*" queried Harrower, glancing at the bottle.

"Yes—it's mighty sorry I am; but we must speak of it in the

past tense, for it's gone — clever and clean, every blessed drop!"

"We have been concealed in this district, northward of Delhi, ever since the massacre. A native officer, the late soubadar-major of the 15th Bengal Infantry, procured us these disguises, and they have not as yet proved very successful."

"How so?"

"Daily we have been in danger of our lives; and how Miss Weston survives all she has undergone, I know not."

"Ay, ay," said Doyle, while his eyes gleamed, "we have heard of dreadful doings at Lucknow, Benares, Cawnpore, Allahabad, and everywhere else. In thousands the poor creatures have perished by the cold steel, by thirst and starvation—God rest their souls in peace!"

"But from whence came you, Doyle, and how did you enter here, unperceived by us?"

"I came from Meerut last."

"Meerut!" echoed Lena, while her colour changed; but Doyle hastened to assure her, with great delicacy and commiseration of manner, that he was totally unable to afford her information of any of her friends, save Rowley Mellon.

He rapidly told them of the night march, or rather the flight of the fugitives, to Meerut, where the 60th Rifles and the Queen's Dragoon Guards protected them; and then of the subsequent affair with the Pindaroons.

"Some weeks after that," he continued, "by permission of Brigadier Graves—accompanied by Rowley Mellon, who was in dreadful anxiety about his wife and her family—I set out for Delhi, that city of murder and devilment. We were both disguised as zemindars of the district, the spoil we found among the Pindaroons furnishing every accessory. We were anxious to discover the fate of our friends, but we had orders also to fulfil; these were to reconnoitre the strength of the enemy, and discover what we might of their future intentions."

"And, dear Mellon," asked Lena, with her eyes full of tears, "oh! Mr. Doyle, where is he?"

"Be composed, dear Miss Weston, though I fear that what I must tell will distress you."

Lena clasped her hands, and raised her sad eyes to heaven.

"Near Tahurpoor, when almost within sight of Delhi, a rascally fakir, named Gunga Rai, who used to loaf about the cantonments, overheard us speaking English, and betrayed us to a body of mutineers, on the march from Bareilly. We had to trust to our horse's heels, and luckily we were well mounted; but the dirty spalpeens, who were cavalry, pursued us with great vigour, wishing to enjoy a little shooting, or take lessons in carving at our expense. Among some mango topes we got separated in the

night. I think Mellon may have got safely into Delhi, for the whole rookawn of the Pandies pursued me; but as I know the country here about as well as if I owned it—having shot and hunted over every inch from Kurnaul to the Ganges—I gave them all the go-by in beautiful style, clearing everything as it came, just as if I rode to hounds, and made straight for the forest here; but, by the powers! my troubles weren't over yet. I fell in with some Dacoits, or other thieves, who next pursued me, and shot my nag under me, a grey mare it was, but a mighty troublesome brute, whose tail was longer than her temper. While the thieves busied themselves with the contents of my portmanteau, I got clear off, just as the night was coming on, and made straight for the temple, though followed and watched, as I thought, by two of the band, from the nuddee, near a ruined villa."

"We certainly were in that quarter, but saw nothing of you, Doyle."

"I could see you plainly enough, and tall and formidable your figures looked in these long Afghan dresses. More than once I cocked my pistols, to have a little practice at you; but happily I thought better of it, and hobbled on. My left knee is well-nigh useless, for my nag fell on it. I crept in here, for I knew the place well, having often tiffed in it with Mellon, when pig-sticking in the forest; and, overcome by toil and utter prostration, I have slept in this den for nearly four-and-twenty hours."

"Then it must have been you, whom we heard snoring so melodiously, as to cause us the utmost perplexity?"

"Devil a doubt of it. About daybreak this morning, I was creeping out to have a peep in the forest, when I saw my two Afghans still scouting in the outer temple—one asleep, and the other watching pistol in hand. I thought of my bad knee, and mighty bad it is, Jack. I drew back softly, and took the bottle of wine. It was a rash act may be, but I was too thirsty to be very particular. In retiring, I kicked a stone with my foot, and when it fell close to yours, by St. Patrick, I thought all was over with me! What a joke! I had little idea 'twas from friends I was borrowing. Why, with the ham, the chupatties, and the wine, we might have had a jovial little picnic on the sunny green sods outside. But such a lark—such a story all this would seem, if told to some of my old chums at Trinity, and other good fellows in Merrion Square. The Doyles of Clonmoney have many a queer story told about them in the county Carlow; but though house burning and head breaking were the smallest things laid to our charge, I never heard of one putting on the turban before—the devil's own caubeen it is. These fine togs as I told you, are the spoil of the Pindaroons," added Doyle, who seemed in excellent spirits, to which, no doubt, the contents of the wine

bottle had greatly contributed. "You may imagine, Miss Weston, that it was mighty soothing to our feelings and conscience to have a little free work with the bayonet among those darkies after we reached Meerut; but by my faith! Malachi, with his collar of gold, Con, of the hundred fights, or blustering Phil Doyle of Ballinasloe, never come through so many cursed adventures as I have done, since that night, when we bolted from Delhi in the dark!"

"If you have such a thing as a cigar about you——," Harrower was beginning.

"That's my last cheroot, Jack," said Doyle sadly, as they came forth from his hiding-place; "and ere long it's out of temper I'll be, as well as tobacco, for with a regular smoker, the two things are inseparable. My last cheroot! oh! Lord, it's in a bog-hole, or well nigh as bad, that I'll be by this time to-morrow."

"Not at all, Doyle—think how long I have been without the soothing weed."

"Ah!" replied Doyle briefly, with a swift but scarcely perceptible glance at Lena—a glance, which, had it been seen, would have provoked Jack, and made her blush, for his eyes were full of mischief; "the sins of a jolly sinner are easily forgiven, as father Molloy at Kilgavower used to say to his niece, though he never forgave that Scotsman for stealing the trout from the holy well; and so you forgive me for taking your wine, —an only bottle too. Well, I thought I'd hit two birds with one stone; cure my own thirst and save a true believer from breaking the laws of his prophet, and so committing what the poor creature thought a mortal sin."

CHAPTER LX.

UNWELCOME VISITORS.

THOUGH a member of a good Irish family, and being a well educated student of old Trinity College, Dublin, Doyle had the strong accent of his country in great perfection, and used to say that he was "not snob enough, like so many 'low caste' Scotsmen and Irishmen, to be ashamed of it."

Far from being so, Pat Doyle rather gloried in it, and strove to cultivate, or rather preserve it.

Doyle's irrepressible flow of spirits had a most favourable effect on those of Lena, and often caused her to smile, an expression which Harrower had not seen in her face since that eventful morning, when the startled marriage party fled from her father's church to the temporary shelter of the Flagstaff Tower; and the Irish officer could perceive that her soft, dark eyes, though retaining all their gentleness, had lost much of their brightness by long and heavy weeping, so he strove by conversation to enliven and amuse her.

In doing so he frequently blundered out the name of Mark Rudkin (who was making himself active in the formation of a troop of Civil Service Volunteers) not through inadvertency; but simply because he knew of no reason for not mentioning it, or stating how the colonel had marched to Sirdhana, ridden to Begumabad, and blown certain mutineers from the guns at somewhere else.

"And so you were actually afraid of us in the moonlight, Mr. Doyle?" asked Lena, to change the subject of the colonel's exploits.

"Faith was I, and in the temple too; those Dacoits, whose scouts I thought you were, are as ugly customers as you'll meet with on a long day's march, Miss Weston."

"But then we spoke English."

"Not much of that, and what there was of it," added Doyle, with a twinkle in his dark grey eye, "I'll go bail, was too low—to softly spoken—for me to hear."

Lena glanced at Harrower, and they smiled together.

"I could only see what I conceived to be two tall fellows in strange dresses," continued Doyle, "and knew not how many

more might be in their rear. Then I am partially lame, and have but a small supply of ammunition."

"Poor Rowley Mellon—I should like to learn his fate—risking life as he has done to seek—to save my dear sister Kate!" said Lena, in a voice of mournful pathos.

"Ah—poor Rowley! I wonder if we shall ever again hear him sing his jolly song of ours—'The Bengal Fusiliers,' when the sixth cooper of wine has gone round the mess bungalow."

"I hope you shall, Mr. Doyle—I do hope that you shall. But—if—but——"

"Ah, those ifs and buts, Miss Weston; they are our worst obstructions in this life; bad luck to them for words!"

This led to general inquiries after friends, who might have reached Meerut.

Of Dicky Rivers Doyle knew nothing.

"Did the Brigadier escape untouched?"

"Old Graves—yes, and is busy preparing to close up on Delhi, when joined by some of our troops lower down country, for all are not destroyed as the desperate fools of the Moguls flatter themselves."

"Horace Eversly of the 54th—is he all right?"

"Oh bedad, but he is," cried Doyle, laughing; "but Horace still parts his hair in the middle, though he has to take his wine without ice, and eat his dinner without white kids at present, where and when he can get it,"

"And Frank Temple, of ours?"

"All right, too, when I left; a brave and resolute boy, that!"

Many others were asked for, whose names brought a shade over the merry eyes of Doyle, when he had to reply, "mortally wounded, and life despaired of," "he'll never be nearer death again, but just once," or "sleeping the sleep of the just; God rest his soul: we buried him at the root of a palm, and had no powder to spare over him;" and so forth. Doyle had to tell of many appalling scenes he had beheld, of harrowing narratives he had heard, and of many heroic and glorious deeds performed by soldiers and civilians alike—the heroism which grief and despair rendered almost a madness.

"The Lord be good to us, Miss Weston," he added, in conclusion, "but we live in dreadful and tearing times."

"And now, Doyle, old fellow," said Harrower, "what is to be done? we must hold a council of war."

"A committee of ways and means."

"We cannot remain here and starve."

"Sorrow else I see for it, unless we make a start soon."

"For where and how?"

"We might, perhaps, make our way to the palace of the Rajah of Jheend, who still remains staunch to the Queen."

"After the narrow escape we had from the proposed treachery of old Kunoujee Lall, I can trust no more natives."

"Then we may make out Meerut."

"It is nearer certainly than the Ganges."

"But the troops must have marched to join the Umballa force, and knowing nothing of their route, we might be cut off by the spalpeens of natives."

"Hemmed in on every side!" exclaimed Harrower, striking his heel on the pavement of the temple. "If we could but reach the Ganges, and get a boat, we might quickly drop down with the stream——"

"And meet some of our troops on their way up, and, thank Heaven, it *is* closing up they are," said Doyle, through his clenched teeth; "for the day of vengeance on that merciless Mogul dynasty is not far off I hope!"

Lena glanced anxiously and mournfully at Harrower, for vengeance required hard fighting, and fighting involved peril. Was she doomed to lose him after all, perhaps? Ah, why had she never missed or valued his great love for her in the days of their happiness and perfect peace!

"Our troops are closing up," resumed Doyle, and it was cheering indeed for them to hear him speak thus; "by this time Allahabad is no doubt retaken, and from thence, by the river steamers, Miss Weston could easily reach the shelter of Calcutta; you know that, and as for us——"

"We must attach ourselves to the nearest European regiment of course, until we can rejoin our own."

"Is not the Ganges canal nearer by half the distance than the river?" asked Lena; "and there a boat could be had."

"True, Miss Weston—but how about the lockage?"

"Ah," exclaimed Lena, clasping her hands; "I did not think of that."

"At every lock we should be questioned by the sepoy guards, and discovery would be certain death," said Harrower.

"Then the Ganges be it!" exclaimed Doyle, emphatically; "but how to reach the river, how to travel such a distance on foot, and with Miss Weston, too——"

"Would that I were dead that you might both be free to leave me!" she said, in a low voice.

"Oh, hush, do not speak thus," said Harrower.

"Then let us make the attempt to go—I can but die by the way."

"Don't talk of dying; it's joking you are, Miss Weston."

"I have little thought of jesting in my head, Mr. Doyle," she

replied, wearily, as she drooped her cheek upon her hand, for though she spoke thus courageously of travelling afoot through a hundred miles of a wild and hostile country, the lassitude of exhaustion and lack of proper sustenance was stealing over her, as the shadows of another night crept on, and the red rays of the Indian sun shed their last farewell in horizontal flakes of light between the countless stems of the forest trees.

While Lena slept for a third night on her couch of leaves, Harrower related to Doyle the story of their early and later engagement, with certain details concerning their quarrel and separation at Thorpe Audley, in which, however, he chose to omit to mention that his temporary rival had been Colonel Rudkin, for somehow he always shrank nervously from the utterance of his name.

"I congratulate you, Jack, heartily and warmly," said Doyle, pressing his hand; "for she and her sisters were the finest girls on this side of the Calcutta Ditch; but I wish we had something to drink their healths in. Oh, that we had a stiff horn of brandy-pawnee, well iced—or whisky grog—one of the noblest Institutions of Great Britain, not forgetting old Ireland, God bless her!"

"I have endured thirst and heat of late enough to drive any man mad!" said Harrower, "and how poor Lena Weston has endured them also, and survived them, Heaven alone knows."

"Poor girl—my heart bleeds to see an English lady reduced to this ebb of misery; but d'ye mind old Tim Riley, of ours?"

"The doctor—yes."

"Well, heat and thirst have finished him; he died of sunstroke on the day Mellon and I left Meerut—struck down on parade, as if by the death-blast of Bundelcund!"

"But he was a heavy drinker."

"Troth he was—of everything but water. As Colonel Ripley used to say, he believed old Riley would pawn the regimental colours for a glass of brandy, if he could get nothing else to spout."

"Sincerely do I pray that Miss Weston may be safe among our own people before the hot season sets fairly in, and it is close at hand now."

"Faith, and so do I, with all my heart. Oh, Jack, how these hot, scorching days, when the air is like the mouth of an open furnace, or the moist ones, when we feel all limp, as if among drying blankets, make me long for a cool ramble, gun in hand, among the green clover or the yellow stubble-fields at home—say in September—knocking over the brown birds, as the darlings rise in whirring coveys along the slopes of the Mayo hills, and the black eagles are watching you from the peaks of Muilrea. Then home at night as fast as a car and a high stepper can take you

—home to a cheery fireside, to sup on a bird of your own bagging —a tasty partridge, with fried bread-crumbs, and with a bottle of old port, or a jug of steaming punch, to be shared with jolly old Father Molloy, the P.P. of Kilgavower. When people have a comfortable home, I wonder why the devil they ever leave it—and comfortable enough ours was, though there was never a penny of rent to be had for law or love. But it's an ill wind that blows nobody good, and it's profited I have by this murdering shindy with the Pandies."

"You—Doyle, how?"

"It has caused some confusion, by the burning of banks and books and ledgers, and so has wiped out some ugly scores of mine, contracted up country here; and but for it, bedad, I might have been now enjoying the luxuries and comforts afforded by Number one Chowringee."

Harrower smiled at his garrulous friend, for the place so familiarly indicated was the debtor's prison at Calcutta.

"Is not the solitude of this vast forest awful?" said he, during a pause.

"Awful! I believe you, my boy, and mighty oppressing to the spirits, too. I can't help listening to the silence," said Doyle, perpetrating an unintentional bull; "but by Jove, there is something breaking that same silence now!"

"Something?"

"Yes, stirring in the wood—hark! voices; they come nearer and nearer."

"Up—up into the gallery, Pat; let us rouse Miss Weston and conceal ourselves. Poor girl—how soundly she sleeps! Are your pistols ready?"

Even while Harrower spoke, the moonlighted vista that was visible from the spacious and pillared entrance of the temple, stretching away into the forest beyond the double row of great stone elephants, seemed to darken as a moving mass drew near—a mass of men on foot and on horseback. Among these the glittering of weapons and of bright ornaments became apparent; then were heard the crashing of branches, reeds, and dead leaves under foot; the clatter of arms and accoutrements, and the noise of many voices talking and laughing, as a band of some forty or fifty natives came straight up the steps of the deserted edifice.

Those on horseback dismounted, and linked their horses together; then all entered the deserted temple together.

"The Dacoits," whispered Doyle in Harrower's ear. "By the Holy Trout of Kilgavower, the very identical Dacoits that gave me chase through the forest."

"Take courage, my own beloved," said Harrower, in the ear of Lena, as he drew her close to him behind the great statue of Seva, and she sighed deeply with her head on his breast. "Courage, I

implore you—courage!" he whispered, and smiled to cheer her, though she saw it not; but it was such a smile as the Spartan youth might have given when he had under his mantle the fox that rent his vitals—smiling to conceal the agony with which terror for her now tortured him.

"Phew!" muttered Doyle, softly cocking his pistols; "there is no shirking the matter. We are in a devil of a mess here—up to the neck in a dirty bog-hole. The child unborn might see his way out of it, but I can't!"

The glare of several torches and Indian fireworks (particularly the flaming trident of Vishnu) elevated on poles, and shedding blue, green, purple, and yellow glares, alternately ruddy or ghastly, or mingling and blending together in rainbow hues, now lighted up a most wild, picturesque, and striking scene, bringing out in bold relief the quaint carvings and details of the ancient Hindoo temple, its wondrously decorated and twisted pillars, wreathed with stony garlands and seven-headed snakes, and more than all, the gigantic figures of the triple gods, each four-armed, with high conical caps, thick flabby lips, depressed noses, staring eyes, and girdles of lotus leaves.

Below them the light glared on the swarthy and ferocious crowd of men, in turbans or topees, with cummerbunds, vests, and short trousers of every hue, bright red or yellow, green or white, and striped, linen, chintz, and calico; and on some, who wore only a spotted leopard's skin, through the holes in which their bare brown legs and arms came forth, lean and sinewy—mere bone and muscle.

Their ears and necks and wrists were decorated with rings and bangles, and all were well but variously armed, with swords, tulwars, pistols, knives, and muskets, and even axes, improvised of cleavers and bill-hooks.

Some appeared to be Mohammedans, others were Hindoos with the trident of Vishnu painted on their brows, imparting a demoniac grotesquerie to their dark visages and shining black eyes. Among them were sepoy mutineers, Bheels, Khonds, and the lowest Kindalas, the outcasts of Menou, for the ranks of the Dacoits were open to recruiting for all the rascals of India.

CHAPTER LXI.

IN THE DEN OF THE DACOITS.

ONE Dacoit who had little more on his person than a short saffron shirt, with a string of berry-beads round his neck, and the trident smeared in ashes and ghee on his brow, but who was armed to the teeth, his girdle being a veritable armoury of weapons, and who seemed to be a Brahmin of degraded condition, now began to harangue the rest.

"What does he say, Doyle?" asked Harrower, in a whisper.

"The devil a bit of me knows; he seems to spake in the unknown tongue."

"Some religious rites are about to be performed, I think."

"Some religious wrongs you mane; but only think of all this sculduddery going on in these days of progress and paper collars, of rifled cannon and photography, when one may send a kiss by telegraph from Cork to Calcutta, and a loving proposal along with it."

"O hush, for pity's sake, Mr. Doyle," implored the sinking Lena, as she placed her trembling hand on his mouth. "If discovered——"

"There will be as great a row as when Clodius was found by the virtuous matrons at the feast of Cybele, disguised in petticoats. If discovered? Then I shall never more see my old mother at Kilgavower, and I will have seen the last of her tender blessings and bank cheques on the Agra—the same postage paid for both—God bless her!" continued the incorrigible Doyle, whom not even their present imminent peril could repress.

Of the various classes of depredators who, under the names of Thugs, Choars, Kuzzacks, and Dacoits, infest or have infested India, the latter were, after the extinction of the first by Lord William Bentinck, among the most formidable.

The Kuzzack robbers were invariably well mounted. They beset the highways, and even the great military roads, singly or in couples, to fall on wayfarers, or persons travelling by dawk; or collected together in formidable numbers, to attack armed caravans or entire villages, forcing their gates and storming them, sword in hand.

The Choars and Dacoits usually limited their outrages to house-breaking. They were each organized under a leader, and to scheme out their lawless intentions, they usually met in some solitary place, and under cover of night, with well-arranged watch-words and signals; though by day they followed avocations of every kind, being externally, like the Thugs, honest and peaceful members of society.

The usual muster-places of the Dacoits are—or rather were—solitary graves, tombs, or ruins, near the scene of their projected operations; and from what Doyle could gather on this night, an attack was contemplated on the fort of a wealthy zemindar of Jheend, situated somewhere near the skirt of the forest.

The sirdar who led them—to wit, the Indian in the leopard-skin, and who figured as a lame mendicant on the roads by day—stood erect to-night, a brawny and sturdy ruffian, armed with an infantry sword and horse-pistols, an Afghan shield and match-lock.

He rapidly disposed of his forces for the attack, while some of them poured into the grooves of their tulwars and poniards a kind of green liquid, doubtless a poison of such potency that a scratch would kill any one; and all this ferocious work was going on in India, at a time when the iron horse and the lightning wire of the Feringhees were just on the eve of introducing the science and civilization of the Western into the Eastern World.

The arrangement of their plans concluded by a religious ceremony—the worship of Durga, patroness of robbers, another form of Kalee goddess of destruction.

A common ghurra, or clay pot of water, with a few blades of the feathery jungle grass therein, was placed in the centre of the kneeling horde, and the degraded Brahmin before mentioned, having by prayer and promises of a portion of the "loot" propitiated the goddess, the torches were extinguished, the temple involved in darkness, and the whole party quietly issued forth into the forest, leaving behind, however, all their horses, some twelve or fifteen in number, hobbled at the entrance.

Two of the band remained to watch them, but these men seemed stupefied with bhang, as they dozed off to sleep the moment their companions disappeared.*

* The Dacoits perpetrated atrocious cruelties on those who concealed their valuables, "burning them with lighted torches or straw, or wrapping cloth or flax steeped in oil round their limbs, and setting it on fire, or inflicting various tortures, to insure immediate death. The object accomplished and the booty secured, the gang retired before daylight, and the guilty individuals resumed their daily avocations. In Bengal alone, six hundred and ninety such atrocities disgraced a single year."—*Eclectic Review* for July, 1845.

As the green curtain falls over some brilliant or strange scene on the stage, so fell darkness and silence on the place where this wild and fantastic group had assembled.

"At last I begin to breathe more freely," said Doyle.

"All this fully explains the source of those cries and voices which we have heard from time to time in the forest. The haunt of those fellows is here!"

"And we must lose no time in quitting it, giving them quiet possession, with our best thanks."

"Thanks for what?" asked Harrower.

"The pick and choice of their cavalry; surely a little horse-stealing here will sit easy enough on my conscience, and on yours, too, Jack."

"But the watchers?"

"We'll knock the devils on the head, and be off, choosing a good nag each. It's little I'd think of hamstringing all the rest, but for mercy to the poor brutes; we'll mar their riding, anyhow, and so prevent pursuit."

"Pleasant, by Jove!"

"What?"

"Those striking lights and shadows of Indian life," said Harrower, bitterly; "but they are somewhat strong for my taste."

Handing Lena down from the gallery, they quitted the place pistol in hand, and came forth into the full silvery blaze of the moonlight. All was still in the darkness of the great temple, save the snoring of the two Dacoits, oppressed by sleep and the noxious drugs they had smoked or chewed; and all was deathly still in the forest, save the occasional plash of the heavy dew-drops, as they fell from the bending and overcharged leaves on the grass below.

With cocked pistol in hand, Doyle bent closely over each of the sleepers, and saw, that save for their heavy respirations, they were still as statues of bronze. This was no time for much mercy or parleying with Pandies, and there was in Doyle's face an expression which showed that had one of those sleepers stirred, or even winked an eye, he would—as he afterwards said—"have shot them both, without a grain of compunction, and sent their spirits howling after their brass gods, and the water-pot of Durga."

But matters were not driven to this extremity.

"The faces of these sleeping devils are as yellow as Lent lilies—the Lord forgive me for likening the blessed flowers to these unbelieving heathens—well, as yellow as buttercups on a May morning," said he; "but, by the Rock of Cashel! if one stirs, I'll handle both the niggers in such a fashion, that their own mother wouldn't know them."

"I shall have this nag," said Harrower, selecting from among the horses (which were nearly all of the ugly and ill-shaped breed of Bengal) a strong and active-looking Arab, more than fourteen hands high; "Miss Weston is a light weight, so this animal must carry us both. It must have belonged to some man of rank, for the saddle is Persian, and ornamented with silver.

"Ay, ay—devil a doubt but horse or saddle might tell a queer story, if either had the gift of speech."

Harrower found the stirrup leathers short enough certainly for a man of his stature, but there was no time to alter them; he placed Lena on the saddle before him: the holster flaps formed a pretty comfortable seat, but she had to support herself by clasping Jack's waist, an arrangement to which he had not the slightest objection. Indeed we may well fancy that he rather liked it.

Doyle rapidly accommodated himself with a Bengal horse which seemed to suit his fancy; then with the sharp blade of his tulwar he slashed through the bridle-reins and girths of the others, letting the saddles fall to the ground.

"Whoop!" he cried as he mounted, forgetting for a moment his lame knee and the sleepers also; "those imps of darkness went through the wood towards the Nuddee, so follow me—this way—towards the east; ere day dawn we shall be nearer the Ganges by many a mile than we are just now."

"Once afloat we shall be safe, dearest Lena," whispered Harrower, as he sought to encourage her, and put his horse in motion.

"The river runs like a vast mill-race for hundreds of miles, and we may fall in with some of the little iron steamers that ply about Allahabad, for all cannot have been destroyed by the Pandies."

Guided by Doyle, who fortunately knew the country well, they soon left the forest behind, and found themselves traversing the flat and fertile district that stretches around Delhi and Meerut.

Harrower and Lena scarcely spoke, but Doyle's spirits rose with the exhilarating ride in the moonlight, with a sense of the great peril they had just escaped, and the general excitement of the whole affair; thus he could not resist chatting and laughing from time to time, especially when he thought of the bewilderment of the Dacoits when they returned and found two of their best horses gone, with the state of the harness of the others.

"At a fight, a hanging, or a christening, a wedding or a burying, we have always something to drink in Ireland; but here have been horse-stealing, a hard ride, a narrow escape, and the devil knows what more, without one drop to moisten our lips, barring the dew, bad luck to it, for discomfort."

Midnight found them riding along the trunk road by Jululabad, near the Ganges Canal, and within less than forty miles of the great river.

"Love is a mighty fine thing in its way," muttered Doyle, as he looked back and saw Lena's head reposing wearily on Harrower's shoulder; "but it would be all the better of a bit of curried chicken, or the smallest taste in life of a broiled bone, with maybe a bottle of sparkling Burgundy well iced. Oh, the devil is in it for luck! and it may be long before we enjoy any of them, I fear."

Harrower's horse, though a fine and active Arab, was quite unused to carry a rider of such bulk as he, and being more than double weighted, showed rapid signs of sinking strength; but a few miles further on brought them to a grove of trees, in which they found concealment, and there they lurked during the heat of the next day. A mango or two, a few dates, and some water from a runnel that fed a wayside well being all their food, till the dusk of the evening saw them once more mounted, with refreshed horses, *en route* for the Ganges, which, as Doyle correctly judged, they would reach at a nearer point, above that first proposed by the old soubadar-major.

They were now in an open and populous district, intersected by a network of fine roads, and thickly interspersed with towns and villages, houses and mosques, factories and oil-mills. On the way they passed many persons on foot or horseback, in palanquins or mounted on elephants, which came trumpeting and lumbering along, switching the flies from their dingy flanks by a palm branch in their trunk; and there were trains or caravans of goods, spoil, provisions, and powder pouring into Delhi, where the vast garrison, said now to be fifty thousand strong, together with its great population, consumed all the supplies of the adjacent country.

They were frequently questioned, for in that quarter the costume of Harrower and Lena were strange; and the circumstance of a man riding with a woman seated on his saddle was, of course, deemed stranger still; but she passed for a *gholaum*, or slave, a captured Eurasian girl, or so forth; and thanks to Doyle's formidable appearance or "make-up," his rich costume, and, more than all, to his ready wit and intense confidence—"pure Irish impudence"—it pleased himself to say, they got on bravely, for to every challenge he replied in good Hindostanee, or in Irish, which, if rather bewildering to no less than four patrols of sepoys, seemed equally satisfactory to the havildars and naicks commanding them.

At all events, he neither spoke the language nor had anything of the aspect of the hated Feringhee Logue, with his great turban, dark visage, coal-black beard and whiskers.

Hence without hindrance, about daybreak, they halted at one of the many ghauts, or landing-places on the bank of the river, where the cross-road that led from Jululabad terminated; and on the other bank, about eight miles distant, the dome of Agapore, a little town, was visible, and thirty miles beyond lies Moradabad, in the land of rice and sugar, but then a stronghold of mutiny and revolt.

The blue waters of the Ganges were sparkling in the rising sun; the sandy and winding steeps of the river banks were richly wooded with the peepul, a species of palm; flowers of every hue were opening their dewy cups, and the myriads of birds were full of song.

High beat the hearts of the fugitives, for here was now the river; but how were they to procure a boat, and on what pretence?

Several crafts of different kinds were moored at the ghaut, some with crews of six or eight men on board, others with a single watcher, who dozed listlessly between the thwarts, smoking his hubble-bubble of cocoa-nut shell, and solacing himself with hemp-seed.

There was one boat, a smart little budgerow, having a kind of deck-house with venetian blinds at its stern, which took the fancy of Harrower; it seemed just to suit their purpose, and to be such as they could manage. They very deliberately fastened their horses to the iron rings placed in a wooden post for that purpose, and conducting Lena, who was closely veiled, on board, Doyle placed in the hands of the two wondering boatmen a handful of rupees, and, with a stern air of authority desired them to unmoor for Pooth, a place which he knew to be a few miles lower down the river.

The fellows seemed indisposed to depart without making inquiry; and they glanced at the horses covered with foam by the river-side, and at the veiled woman suspiciously—for the time was one of outrage, insolence, and lawlessness; but the air with which Doyle adjusted the pistols in his Cashmere girdle, and his liberal display of rupees, with their hope of *buxees* (a handsome gratuity) overcame alike their scruples and their curiosity, and in a few minutes more, the budgerow was floating swiftly down the stream, guided by the round paddles or oars of the Indian boatmen.

Within the little cabin built at the stern, Lena reclined on some cushions and a spare sail.

After a time, a sound like a half-stifled cry made her rise in alarm and peep out. The budgerow had turned an angle of the wooded shore, the ghaut had disappeared astern, and Harrower and Doyle were now at the oars, and working with a hearty will.

She looked inquiringly for the boatmen; but they had both disappeared!

In fact, no sooner had the budgerow reached a safe distance from the ghaut, and turned an angle of the stream, than Harrower and Doyle, by a concerted movement, tossed both the men into the water, thus possessing themselves of the boat, and they were now pulling with a strength and skill for which they had to thank their island hardihood, and the annual boat-races of their universities at home. Such pulling as theirs was not seen everyday on the Ganges, which seemed to smoke beneath the budgerow, as they tore it through the water.

"Oh!" cried Lena, with clasped hands, "you cannct—surely you cannot have drowned the poor men!"

"No, no, Miss Weston, 'twasn't born to be drowned, these fellows were. See they are scrambling ashore," said Doyle, "and luckily on the northern bank of the river."

"We are getting from bad to worse, Doyle," said Harrower laughing.

"How do you mean?"

"From rank horse-stealing, we have betaken us to open piracy."

"Piracy is it, bedad? They've got the rupees and the two horses, if we borrow their dirty boat."

"But as the nags were no doubt stolen, the boatmen may come to grief."

"The devil may care; think of the dying cries of the women and children slaughtered by the natives in the open streets. 'Remember the women and babies!' was the cry of the Rifles as they marched like pale madmen—pale with rage and fury—out of Meerut. This is no time, Jack, to pity a Pandy."

And it was the same heartfelt shout which animated the troops in many a terrible charge ere vengeance was achieved and the mutiny crushed!

CHAPTER LXII.

ON THE GANGES.

THE budgerow—a corruption of the English word barge—which the fugitives had appropriated, was a very small specimen of the thousands of native boats that float upon the vast stream which traverses the plains of Bengal.

It was chiefly formed of bamboo, without a keel, for the more shallow parts of the river, but it had a powerful rudder; and in its after part was the species of cabin, formed by upright bamboos roofed with leaves, over which was thrown a coarse cloth.

To Lena this place was assigned; it was cool and pleasant, and had on each side a venetian blind, which she could open or shut at pleasure.

The season was so far advanced, that the Ganges was deeper and broader than usual; but at the speed with which they ran—about five miles an hour—all their skill in steering and guiding the craft by poles and paddles on each side, were requisite to pilot her clear of shallows where she might lie in the mud, or stumps of trees on which she might founder, or the greater boats coming up with the track rope, which might have run them down.

Sustenance had they none, save some of the rice and millet which were to have formed the simple meal of the boatmen, and thus they had to toil under a burning sun till the evening drew on, and then as the river was straight and tolerably clear ahead, though thousands of boats were on it, they could trust to the sail and the pleasant northwest wind.

A rough bamboo formed the mast, on which was a sail of sackcloth, lashed to a square yard that ran on iron rings, with a halyard and down haul, and which they could work by sheets aft, according to the wind and the turns of the river.

Watching the summer stars come out of the blue vault above, with all their oriental rapidity after the sun sank beyond the flat and monotonous plains of the Doab, while steering, Doyle, whose spirit rarely flagged, began to sing the "Cruiskeen lawn," with "Garryowen," and "Granauaile" in succession, and with all the ready transition and depth of emotion peculiar to a genuine son of the Green Isle.

In the rude cabin aft, Lena lay upon the couch formed by cushions and a spare sail. She was weary, worn to excess; but Harrower, though his heart bled for her, was compelled to leave her in loneliness, while he assisted in working the boat, the speed of which was somewhat consoling.

"Do not heed me, dear Jack," said she, in a tremulous voice, when once he came to her apologetically; "yet I cannot help wondering how, without losing my senses, I got through some of those trying scenes and events in the forest and elsewhere. To-morrow, after I have had some sleep—to-morrow, I shall be better, please Heaven."

But the morrow found her with a quickened pulse and a burning skin; with eyes of unnatural brightness and parched dry lips, for she was in a nervous fever at last! Her temples throbbed, her sight ached with the heat and glare of the sunlit river; the shore looked like a floating mist, the air seemed to be full of fiery and shining particles; but she strove to conceal her sufferings from Harrower, and for a time succeeded in doing so.

Meanwhile by current, oar, and sail, the swift, light boat flew on, passing hundreds of craft—large passenger budgerows, little dhingees, huge pulwars, or floating shops, in which every species of ware is retailed, and, from one of these, Doyle procured some food and sherbet, fruit and cold sangaree, or negus, comforts which perhaps saved Lena Weston's life.

For a time, Harrower felt that the novelty of the situation was not without its charm.

It was pleasing, certainly, to be on the Ganges, the mighty and sacred river, which the poor Hindoos fondly believe to issue from the root of the bujputra tree, and thus to flow direct from Heaven; and which for more than fifteen hundred miles rolls down through vast and populous plains, teeming with verdure and fertility; through forests, inhabited by herds of tigers, leopards, and through swamps, the abode of the gaunt fever king, where the rhinoceros, the buffalo, and the deadly cobra-capello, contest for existence with the wild and hardy wood-cutters.

On sped their boat, past great fortresses of unknown antiquity, gloriously beautiful temples, with flights of white marble steps to the water, where at sunrise the graceful Hindoo girls were seen bathing like naiads or syrens, and at evening setting their many-coloured votive lamps afloat upon the stream; past stupendous tombs of kings and nations that have passed away; past mosques, pagodas, and ghauts, over the cloistered quadrangles of which, the mighty banian or the graceful peepul flung their branches; past groves of cocoa and tamarind trees, and fields of cotton, sugar cane and indigo, till the river, ere while would widen to an inland sea, with great fleets upon its current, which for ages has

swept to the Bay of Bengal those corpses of the Hindoo race that were unburned on the funeral pyre.

At Canouge, about ten miles below where the Ramgunga river joins the Ganges, and where stands the tomb of Mohammed of Ghiznee, the waters wideued and deepened, and much larger craft appeared,

The fugitives had now traversed with complete success, more than one hundred and fifty miles of the river; but the evening of the second day saw both Harrower and Doyle so prostrated by fatigue, as to be incapable of keeping the boat clear of a huge and towering panchway, or passenger boat. Broad and high, it was one of unusual size, shaped like a snuffer-tray, and roofed over with palm-leaves. It had two masts of tapering bamboo, with cross-jack yards, topped sharply up, and without sails on them, as she was going slowly against the wind and stream, with twelve great sweeps out, and seemed full of men.

"Botheration—we're clean spilt at last, and Irish will do nothing for us here!" said Doyle, with sudden alarm, as a line of very dark faces (oddly enough, with Glengarry forage caps, having the Scotch fess check round them) appeared, looking over the gunnel, most of them with Chinsurrah cheroots in their mouths.

As the budgerow came crash upon her bow, a storm of tongues in some strange dialect of the Hindostanee, assailed them, and then a voice in pure English added,—

"Swamp the d——d fools! throw into them a cold shot, or anything that comes to hand."

"No, no—shove them off with a boat-hoot," added another English voice.

"They are only a couple of niggers in a budgerow!" expostulated the first.

"But may be very harmless fellows for all that, Tracy," urged the second.

"We are Englishmen, and want assistance," cried Harrower.

"Speak for yourself, Jack," said Doyle, "for I'm an Irishman to the backbone, I'm proud to say; but heave us a rope, you devils ye, before we drift past."

"Pat Doyle of ours, for a thousand rupees!" cried the officer who had first spoken.

"Is that you, Bob Tracy, of the Bengal Fusiliers?"

"Of course it is."

"Mighty kind and considerate it was of you to propose swamping us with a cold shot, you rapparee, whom I brought out to India as perfect a griff as ever passed Mud Point. A nice paragraph you'd be making for the *Hurkaru*, to say nothing of a step in the corps. And your thousand rupees, too! Is it on the highway you've been, since I left head-quarters?"

"Who, and what on earth are you fellows?" asked an officer,

with an air of authority, and as if in no mood for jesting, and who appeared in undress infantry uniform.

"Two European officers of the Delhi garrison," replied Harrower, and then a loud murmur of interest and satisfaction arose from the crowded boat.

In short, the craft of which they had run foul, proved to be one of several track boats, then coming up the river with a Sirmoor battalion of Ghoorkas, and two companies of the Bengal Fusiliers, forming part of the forces advancing to join those of Meerut, under Brigadier Graves, prior to taking part in the recapture of Delhi.

"Hurrah, Jack Harrower!" cried Doyle, as he made fast the rope; "by the powers of Moll Kelly, but we're saved, after all!"

"Thank God, dearest Lena, that our troubles are now over," said Harrower, in a low and fervent voice, as he raised her tenderly, kissed her with a heart beating happily, and lifted her on board the great barge, where their appearance excited as much interest among the dark and wiry little Ghoorkas, as among the soldiers of the Bengal Fusiliers, with whom Doyle, by his jollity and bonhomie, had long been a well-known officer and especial favourite.

As Englishmen, they crowded round Lena with earnest commiseration and sympathy, for all Europeans were maddened by the sufferings which had preceded the death of the women and children in Delhi and elsewhere; thus there was something terribly significant of the retribution to come, in the stern joy with which these men welcomed her, as she was borne into the cabin in the arms of Harrower.

CHAPTER LXIII.

A SEARCH FOR THE LOST.

BY this time the King of Delhi, the princes, and the people more especially, had begun to discover that they had made changes which by no means improved their present circumstances or their future prospects. *All* the Feringhees were not slain by a simultaneous rising, as their fakirs, dervishes, and other emissaries had informed them; and already they heard of forces mustering at Meerut, or marching from Umballa, and many other points, intent on avenging the outrages of that terrible month of May.

Shumshoodeen Khan, and other leaders of the cavalry mutineers, urged that Meerut should be attacked; but Pershad Sing, and those of the infantry, replied that all their men would be required to guard the great City of Delhi, if it was invested; and at the councils, held in the magnificent dewan khana, faces grew pale when they heard how rapidly the troops from Umballa were advancing, hanging, shooting, or blowing from the guns all who fell into their hands; and of all the deaths to be endured, religious prejudices render the latter mode the most terrible and repugnant alike to Mohammedan and Hindoo.

And all unused to the use of arms, to drill, and, that which is superior even to drill, discipline, the two princes, Mirza Mogul and Mirza Abubeker, were so completely bewildered by their new official positions, one as Commander-in-Chief of the army, and the other as General of the cavalry, that they excited the contempt and derision of the very men who had perpetrated such deeds of infamy in their names, and had flocked to the standard of their father, the aged but ferocious Mohammed.

Stormy debates and discussions took place in the dewan khana; the Koran of the Prophet, the Vedas of Brahma, the Puranias, or Eighteen Sacred Histories of the Hindoos, and the entire Shasters, were ransacked for bitter quotations against the Feringhees; but the bayonet and the tulwar were the arguments most in vogue. Codes, as little known in Britain as the "Scaled Book of the Nine Spiritual Rocks"—the creed of the Free Spirits of Teutonia—may be now, were cited against us; and even the Khonds, those worshippers of Boora and the devotees of Tari, who offer up their female children as human sacrifices to the

goddess of the earth, and who boast that God is nearer to them in their open and sacred groves, than under domes of gold or marble, raised their hands and voices against the Kafir Feringhees!

All was embodied in one sentence:—

"Our European tyrants are few in number; kill them all, and let us swear by the Koran, and on the water of the Ganges, to do so!"

The calm, indolent, and sensual life led hitherto by the family of the King of Delhi, as pensioners of the East India Company, was completely changed now. Thus in council the two effeminate Shahzadahs were tormented and perplexed by the Muftis, or expounders of Mohammedan law, and their quarrels with the Pundits, or chief exponents of the law of Brahma, with their vakeels, or secretaries, on one hand; and on the other by their newly-made generals, rissaldars, soubadars, and so forth, many of whom they could not understand without an interpreter, for their palace was thronged by Bheels, Rajpoots, Mahrattas, and all the tribes of Bengal, so their royal highnesses began to find that they had rather a sorry time of it, and were not likely to forget the year 1273 of the Hejira.

Meanwhile the city, beyond the palace walls, continued to be a scene of incessant outrage and plunder; the guards at the gates "looted" all who passed out or in; the streets were strewn with arms, accoutrements, and ammunition, the plunder of the great arsenal. The kotwal, or mayor, was changed every other day, and many of the sepoys were so laden with silver and gold coin, robbed from the citizens, that they could scarcely carry the load. Poor regiments became jealous of the rich. English books and furniture littered all the streets, and the bones of their owners lay unburied outside the city, and for twenty miles along the roads leading thereto were others, whitening in the sun, the relics of victims slain by the Goojurs, or Hindoo gipsies, who prowled about after nightfall, searching for fugitives; and now, to increase the general confusion, every petty rajah and zemindar took arms, for plunder or revenge.

When the princes appeared among their tumultuary forces, their orders and arrangements excited laughter, according to the narrative of a native of Delhi; they were seen to tremble at the firing of cannon or musketry, and were compelled now to be often under arms in the glare of the noonday sun. The sweetmeats sent by the King for the sepoys in camp were invariably plundered by those at the gates. The sepoys neglected their regimental bugle, and were seldom mustered by their new officers, and "the nobles and begums, together with the princes, began to regret the loss of their joyful days."

As old Mohassan Jamsetjee stated before the Court Martial, which afterwards tried the King of Delhi,—

"I could never relate all the horrors I have seen in the city during two short moons, were I to live to the age of Lokman the Wise!"

"And how long did he live?" asked Jack Harrower, the junior member of the court.

"Three thousand years, sahibs," was the confident reply.

Such was the state of affairs in the city of the Moguls, when Rowley Mellon, disguised as a wealthy zemindar of the kingdom, his face dyed with tobacco-juice, and his fair whiskers and mustachios shaved completely off, reined up his horse, and paused to survey the scene (from the eastern end of the bridge of boats by which the Jumna is crossed), on the evening subsequent to his separation from Doyle, and after a close pursuit and narrow escape.

He was handsomely attired and well armed; his heart was desperate and resolute; he was perfect master of the Hindostanee; in all its strange phrases and idioms, and he had everything to inspire him but the hope of success, and yet his gnawing anxiety urged him on in quest of a knowledge that might break his spirit for ever.

He had escaped the sowars, and the frantic fakir who led them, as they had all gone in pursuit of Doyle towards the forest; so he had shaped his course in search of information first to the house of Khoda Bux.

On his way thither, he learned from some syces, who were cutting grass for the cavalry horses, that a white woman had that morning been brought forth from Delhi, half dead, tied to the corpse of a kindala, by the coolies of the market-place, and then flung into the Jumna, near the Nawab Bastion.

Who might that white victim have been?

Mellon felt his heart bursting with grief and wrath, and he restrained with difficulty an impulse to pistol his informants, who were quite unconscious of offence.

On reaching the farm-house of the Hindoo ryot he found much grief and confusion prevailing there. The venerable Khoda was no more. A heavy and sudden sickness had fallen upon him, and his six sons had dutifully borne him—even as he in other years had borne his own sire—to the bank of the Jumna, on a pallet, where at low water he had been left to die, to be washed away by the river when it rose, to become a meal for the first alligator that came out of the mud, or appetized tiger, whose nose detected something eatable from amid his lair in the jungle grass.

The household were plunged in grief and were all secluded for the time; but, by a lucky chance, Mellon, after long waiting and anxious pondering, saw the ayah Safiyah coming from the tank, with a jar of water balanced on her head, with that grace peculiar

to the Indian women, and he at once made himself known to her.

She wept, and kissed his hands many times when he dismounted; and his feelings may be imagined when she informed him that Kate—his wedded bride, his soft and gentle, bright-haired Kate—was a captive in her father's house—the slave, the gholaum of a man named Pershad Sing, an ex-havildar of the 54th Infantry.

He was told of her having been secreted by his old landlord the kind Parsee; of the strange plan formed to get her out of Delhi; of her being discovered, and that she, Safiyah, "had only learned but a day or two before, at the shop of the merchant in Silver Street, that Missee Kate was still in the house of Weston Sahib."

She also related that a hundred gold mohurs were offered for her, dead or alive, by the Delhi princes, and that proclamations to that effect were posted in the Kotwally and on the eleven gates of Delhi.

Why did Pershad Sing seclude her from those royal personages who offered this reward?

Why? Mellon felt his blood run cold.

"Oh, Safiyah," said he; "a woman may do much—more than a man—where mother wit and strategy are requisite; you will aid me to set her free—aid me, and name any reward that it is in my power to give—or in the power of my friends."

"Reward, I seek none," replied the Indian woman, "none but in the love I bear the poor mem-sahibs and little Missee Polly Baba,* and all the family. I shall serve you, sahib, and make the attempt, even though this Pershad Sing should discover and kill me—yet he would scarcely dare to do *that*," she added, pointing to the grove of the Three Temples, where her three younger sisters, all pretty girls, were the "spiritual wives" of the priests who officiated, so her family had some influence in the district.

Mellon's spirit rose on finding that he had fallen so quickly on direct traces of the lost one, and still more when he heard that Lena, and big, curly-pated Jack Harrower, had both escaped the terrors of the massacre, and were, or had been recently, in the forest of Soonput Jheend.

The ayah accompanied him at once to the city, and evening found them by the bridge of the Jumna, when Mellon's emotion compelled him to pause before enacting the first serious part of his task, confronting and passing the guard of the abhorred sepoys at the Calcutta Gate, to which the new causeway leads direct from the bridge of boats.

The city, with all its walls and towers, lay steeped in the

* Dear, a term of affection.

brilliant splendour of the setting sun; undimmed by smoke or haze, every feature of the lovely panorama could be seen in all its details, distinctly as if through a powerful glass.

We have said there is little or no twilight in India; evening was now at hand, with starry night treading swiftly on the heels of Hesperus. The whole of the western quarter of the sky away beyond Hansi was one flood of amber light, streaked with broad bars of purple, brightening into orange and shining gold as the sun sank down behind the round domes of the great mosque of Shah Jehan and its slender minarets of marble, throwing far across the plain the shadows of the massive walls where many a bayonet gleamed as the sentinels trod to and fro, while high over all uprose the vast façade of the palace of the Moguls, with its eight great octagon towers, crowned by open and beautiful cupolas of red and white marble.

With Safiyah following him at a respectful distance, Mellon slowly and deliberately walked his horse along the pontoon bridge, close under the walls of the magnificent palace and the Selinghur fort, and then wheeled to the left, through the Calcutta Gate, where many a time and oft he had been subaltern of the guard.

The sentinels of the Hurrianah Light Infantry (a corps which had killed all its officers and recently come in) looked at him with a careless glance, but without attempting any molestation, for they were busy with one of those native newspapers which were printed in Hindostanee or in Oordoo, and one copy of which, prior to the mutiny, is said to have sufficed for a whole battalion of sepoys, so strong was the vituperation against the British in their columns.

He threw a handful of annas to a begging Fakir, laid his whip across the face and shoulders of a coolie, who was offering some impertinence to Safiyah, and with all the air of a haughty Mohammedan zemindar, rode straight along the front of the palace, towards Chandney Choke.

Again he was in Delhi, every street and feature of which were associated with the faces and the voices of those dear friends he had lost; the scene of rides, rambles, and of shopping excursions with his beloved Kate.

How memory went back to every minutiæ of the past, rendering griefs and regrets but a series of agonies; to that marriage morning ere the crash came—Kate in her white bridal dress, with Jack's champac ornaments, and her long lace veil; the bridesmaids, Lena, Polly, Flora Leslie, and the rest; the white crape bonnets, the smiling and blooming English faces, the happy circle; then the horrors and the chaos by the Cashmere Gate and Flagstaff Tower, and the subsequent events, of which no man has yet dared to write—events of which "the *worst is left unsaid*."

Was he the same Rowley Mellon still? (often had poor Kate

asked of herself a similar question), and was this city of the accursed still the Delhi of those days?

One fact appeared to him evident, that the alleged force of the mutineers had been greatly over-estimated by the terror of fugitives and by the inborn oriental love of falsehood and exaggeration.

CHAPTER LXIV

AGAIN IN THE STREET OF SILVER.

THE seeming zemindar dismounted at the house of the Parsee in Chaudney Choke, accompanied by the ayah, and entered the shop, almost jostling the formidable Baboo Bulli Sing, who swaggered out most splendidly armed and attired, after making various purchases, of such value as to indicate that his funds were more than usually flourishing.

Mellon at once made himself known and stated his errand and purpose.

Mohassan was filled with great alarm for his visitor's safety, but with much greater concern for himself. The sepoys were prone enough to plunder the people on pretence of concealing the Feringhees or no pretence whatever according to their humour, and all who could speak English were forbidden to do so, while those who could write the language, had their right hand stricken off, by order of the King of Delhi.

Tidings that the troops from Umballa were coming on, certainly added to the natural desire of the Parsee to befriend Mellon, whom he advised of the impossibility of getting into the house of Pershad Sing, guarded as it was by sepoys, and filled constantly by disorderly natives, such as the budmashes or irregular soldiers of the city.

"Disorderly natives," muttered Mellon, through his clenched teeth; "and—and *she* is there!"

"I have gold to offer," he added, after a long pause.

"Those sepoys are so laden with spoil, that could you offer them the wealth with which the devil sought to tempt our Holy Prophet Zerdusht* it would scarcely avail, and might naturally excite cupidity and suspicion."

"Oh, my old friend—what then, would you advise?"

"To-morrow night the colonel gives a feast of lanterns at which many persons will be present."

"Of what kind?"

"Such as the naicks and havildars, whom he has made captains and lieutenants; bands of Nautch dancing-girls, mad fakirs, swaggering budmashes with shields and tulwars, and amid the confusion they will create, something might be attempted to get the poor lady away, and—and——"

"What?" asked Mellon, impatiently and sadly.

But Mohassan paused, for he was too much afraid of the tyrannical Brahmin sepoys, and Rajpoot sowars, to add what the natural impulse of his heart suggested, 'and bring her *here*."

"Till to-morrow, then—though much may happen in that space of time," said Mellon; "I have endured much since I lost her," he continued, in a broken voice, "and a few hours more of this gnawing anxiety may not add much to the sum total of the misery I have endured in common with too many others. Safiyah, I shall go to the house to-morrow with a coloured lantern and mingle with these rascally mummers."

But the quicker-witted Indian woman, who had been thinking while Mellon and the Parsee were speaking, had formed a plan of her own.

The most successful escapes achieved during the mutiny, had, in some instances, been made by those who had the skill or good fortune to disguise themselves properly as natives; and it was evident that it could only be in some such disguise, that she could leave her father's house—or rather, as it was now, the house of her captor.

So various are the races of India, that by darkening the complexion, disguising the figure, and speaking a little Hindoostanee, it was not difficult among the people of one race, to pass oneself off, as belonging to another.

Safiyah knew this, and entreated Mellon to leave the entire matter in her hands. She had no doubt of her ability to get into the house among the Nautch girls and others; then she knew every apartment and passage, and every door and window were rendered familiar to her, by a five years' residence as a domestic in Doctor Weston's family; and if she could once procure an interview, however brief, with "Missee Baba Kate," she had little

* Zoroaster.

doubt of being able to free her, if she was well and possessed of sufficient strength to assist in her own escape.

The chief difficulty of the smart and active ayah lay in the selection of a disguise for her lady, as she meant to convey one concealed about her own person; the Parsee had dresses of all kinds in stock, so she only doubted the choice.

There is a great difference in the material of the dresses worn by the Hindoo women of India, which vary according to *caste*, but very little in style.

In the majority of cases, one piece of cloth forms an entire dress. A thin sort of muslin, variously dyed, twenty or thirty yards long, is disposed by the Hindoo girl round her lithe and slender waist where she cunningly fastens it without button or pin; then she gathers the end in folds over her shoulders, and so are these arranged as to make a covering for her head and bosom if necessary; but as the back, arms, and feet are left bare, this disguise would never have suited the pure and unstained skin of Kate Mellon.

Neither would the *ravakei*, or scanty bodice, having sleeves only to the elbow, which, with the muslin web just described, forms the dress of the Christian women in that sultry clime, for such an attire at that crisis would neither have availed for the purpose of safety or escape.

Safiyah selected the dress of the Mohammedan women (who always follow the Arabian or Persian fashions), a sleeved tunic, with trousers to the ankle, and a thick veil. These she concealed under the ample folds of her own muslin dress, and carrying a lantern, on the night in question prepared to join the disorderly mummers who crowded the house and gardens of Colonel Pershad Sing, of the 54th Native Infantry.

"Once outside the city we shall be safe," said Mellon, hopefully, to the courageous ayah, "as patrols of cavalry were to come this way nightly from Meerut, to further any scheme Mr. Doyle and I might form, and to clear the place of those brawling budmashes and villainous Goojurs who have been committing such terrible crimes of late."

"But Mellon, sahib," said Safiyah, "why should we enter the city?—why pass the gates?'

"How can we do otherwise?"

"Can you have forgotten that there is the river? Take one of the many boats that lie moored on the Jumna, and be at the gate of the garden. I shall bring my mistress forth that way; and if I fail, or other plans are necessary, I will come there alone and tell you."

This plan seemed so simple, so full of encouraging hope, that Mellon, only lest she might misunderstand him, repressed a vehement desire in his great gratitude to embrace the dark ayah,

who, being resolute and prepared for any emergency, placed in her girdle a sharp *kundeer*, a deadly kind of dagger, with a hilt shaped like the letter H, having a cross grasp in which the clenched hand is inserted, and with which a thrust can be given with the whole front force of the extended arm.

They separated, and while she took her way to the villa, he, well armed with a brace of revolvers under his vest, and a sharp tulwar slung by his side, quitted the city after sunset, unchallenged by the Wellesley Bastion, which was open and incomplete (being in course of erection when the revolt took place), and then he found himself on the bank of the Jumna.

The sun had given place to night, but his amber splendour yet lingered in the west, and against it rose in outline, dark as indigo, the giant mass, and clustered round towers of the Selinghur Fort, the great domed cupolas of the palace, and the long slender line of the bridge of boats, under which flowed the broad river, partly tinted with blue, purple, and gold by the changing sky above.

All was still save the howling of an occasional jackal, the shrill voice of the chowkeydar, or watchman on the palace walls, the clang of a metal ghurrie as a sentinel struck the hour at his post, or the chafing of the river in its downward flow among the strong reeds, or the light shallow boats that were moored by its margin.

He soon selected one from among them, many, having been the pleasure boats of the late European residents, were totally without owners now. By a stone he smashed the padlock of the mooring chain, and shipping an oar sculled away to the place with which he was so familiar—the garden gate of the good Doctor's mansion. The white plastered façade of the latter, its terraced roofs, with the great herons still seated thereon, he could see clearly in the cold starlight, and it seemed as if but yesterday since he had been talking with Kate by the river terrace there—talking of their future married hopes and plans, while watching Polly and Dicky Rivers playing at *goolale*, and shooting pellets at the wild birds by the water side.

There was no moon yet, which he considered an omen of good success.

Floating in the middle of that river (into which, as into the sacred Ganges, the Hindoo women had flung their shuttles as a mystic sign of the coming strife), with his eyes fixed alternately on the eastern façade of the mansion, as it rose above the garden wall, and on the gate, which every moment, with tremulous expectancy, he hoped to see open, and two female figures, or one, at least, issue forth, Mellon waited there oblivious alike of the chill dew and the chances of observation from the walls of the city, of which he was within half musket range; and at that time sentinels expended their ammunition on the slightest caprice or

suspicion. He knew, also, that all the guards were mounted with loaded arms, as he had spent nearly the whole day in rambling about the city, and making mental notes for the use of the brigadier at Meerut.

Hour after hour of anxiety drew slowly and wearily on, ever with the fear that each, as it passed, might render Safiyah and himself too late, perhaps, to save her; and even if saved, what a narrative might he not have to hear from Kate—his once pure, happy, and adorable Kate!

Meanwhile he could see how the entertainment of Pershad—he of the grotesquely long moustache—was progressing in the mansion of the Westons, which had once been the very focus of the fashionable European society in Delhi. House and gardens were alike gay with innumerable lanterns of coloured paper, carried on bamboo canes, while the walls glowed ever and anon in the explosion of fireworks, which cast alternate glares of deep crimson, brilliant green, and gorgeous purple, bathing in successive floods of light the whole façade, causing the lofty windows to gleam in giant prisms, and imparting to the great herons which sat winking and blinking on the balustrades so many hues on breast and pinion, that they seemed for the instant like birds of brilliant plumage.

Occasionally the voices of the Nautch girls pleasantly attuned the sound of their tambourines; their wiry vinas and the tinkling of their golden anklet bells came floating from amid the shrubberies of oleanders and acacias on the soft night wind across the silence of the star-lighted river.

Suddenly there came another sound, that made Mellon's heart leap painfully with intense expectation.

It was caused by the bolt of the garden-gate being shot sharply back; and with a vigorous hand he impelled the boat close in shore, as the familiar barrier in the wall opened, and two females rushed forth, each with a parti-coloured paper lantern, which they instantly extinguished.

"Kate! Kate!" he exclaimed, in a voice which emotion rendered hoarse and quite unlike his own.

"Oh, Mellon! Mellon!" was the soft but piercing response, for her voice was full of intense pathos; and sobbing with joy, she was clasped in his arms.

Thus was Kate saved when her peril at the hands of Pershad Sing, the Rissaldar, and the Fakir were greatest—rescued by one of those interpositions of fate, or happy coincidences, which seem to come providentially and direct from Heaven.

Never, even in the first flush of their love and tenderness, did Mellon gather his restored Kate in his strong and sheltering arms with such rapture as on the occasion of this reunion—this restoration, as it were, from death; and tender indeed was the

tearful and impassioned kiss for which both had yearned, but never hoped to exchange again.

Weeping with joy in the bottom of the boat, the faithful and affectionate ayah lay at Kate's feet, clasping them to her bosom; and Mellon, while he sculled the skiff round the long and narrow isle which lies below the pontoon bridge, and across the river, was too much occupied by the great fact of Kate's presence and safety to hear even the story of her deliverance, which was briefly this.

The sepoy sentinel at the front gate had narrowly examined Safiyah Bux, and perceiving that she was undoubtedly a native, had permitted her to pass, saying,—

"Enter, stranger, in the name of Brahma, and peace be with you."

Thus permitted and encouraged, she mingled with the guests, the Nautch girls, the sowars, fakirs, and others, and imitating their bearing, had rambled unnoticed all over the mansion and gardens, lantern in hand; but nowhere among the many persons she saw—the Hindoo cousins, nieces, and gholaums of Pershad Sing, all of whom made themselves quite at home in the dining-room, boudoir, and drawing-rooms—could she see her young mistress; so her heart began to sink with apprehension lest the tidings told by Pershad to the Parsee were true, that she had been sent out of Delhi—Heaven alone knew whither—or worse, perhaps, had been destroyed.

At last, when all the disorderly rout were assembled in the verandah or on the terrace, to witness the fireworks, she bethought herself of the bedrooms, in which she had so often sung little Willie and Polly to sleep, and dressed the beautiful blonde hair of Missee Kate.

Swiftly she made her way straight for the chamber of the latter, and found her just on the eve of springing from her window in wild terror of *who* her visitor might be. Then the ayah told, in broken accents, how a word or two had reassured the poor trembler; how rapidly the Mohammedan dress and veil were assumed; and how they had both reached the garden-gate, unperceived and undisturbed, by a private walk known to them both; and as she concluded a narrative, which, with all its interest, Mellon scarcely understood, so much was he absorbed with Kate, she flung into the river, as a votive offering, the key of the bedroom, the door of which she had locked; and thus it was found secured on the outside, to the great consternation of Pershad Sing and the surprise of Shumshoodeen Khan and the fakir, when, about two hours after, they burst it open, and, as already related, found Kate *gone!*

Landing near the pontoon bridge, they set out afoot on the Meerut road, but had barely gone three miles, when the tramp of horses was heard, and, as Mellon had conjectured, a patrol of the

Queen's Dragoon Guards, consisting of twenty men under an officer, came slowly and leisurely up; and just as the three wayfarers were about to take shelter in a thicket, lest the horsemen *might* prove to be sowars, the sound of English voices made Mellon start forward and discover himself.

The dragoons gave a hearty English cheer on learning that one European woman—an English lady, more than all, the missing Mrs. Mellon—was under the sure protection of their Sheffield steel, and nearly the whole party expressed an earnest desire to shake hands with her, while Kate wept freely again, as she heard the familiar tone of their voices and saw the bright honest English faces of the Carbineers—for to be even a European was to be a brother now.

Mellon had told Kate of Lena and Jack Harrower having escaped the carnage at the Cashmere Gate and Metcalfe House; but that of the fate of Polly and others he was still unhappily ignorant.

At the hamlet of Shaderuh, which was close by them, the officer of the patrol, without the ceremony of asking leave, took possession of an ekah, or light pony-gig on two wheels, with a canvas hood, for Kate and the ayah. The proprietor, after the cold barrel of a pistol had been put to that part of his person whereon the trident of Vishnu was smeared—to wit, his forehead—felt himself constrained to act the part of driver; and in this rather rough conveyance, which had too probably been stolen from some European fugitive, she reached in safety the now half-ruined town of Meerut, where Mellon had to report the loss of his friend, and the state and aspect of the city, to the brigadier in command.

From what he had been able to gather, through personal observation and the information given by the Parsee, there would seem to have been in Delhi twenty-six regiments of revolted Bengal Infantry, portions of eight regiments of cavalry (chiefly Mohammedans), two thousand six hundred miscellaneous deserters, and a vast force of Gholandazees or artillerymen.

———

CHAPTER LXV

BY THE HILLS OF ALMORA.

THAT light-hearted individual, Pat Morris Doyle, after the alleged manner of his country—the land of larks and laughter, bulls and blunders—had made a mistake in concluding that the troops under Brigadier Graves had left Meerut to meet the forces from Umballa or anywhere else. They had remained there, leaving no means untried to strengthen the station against any attack from the insurgents in Delhi.

Only two days of rest, of peace, and quiet fell to the lot of Mellon and Kate after their arrival at Meerut; yet these two days almost sufficed to render the past, to her, a horrible dream, which, when told, she strove to forget: the terrors endured by the Cashmere Gate; the wandering in the streets of Delhi, alone, treading on or stumbling over the dead; the dreary night in the mosque of Shah Jehan; the seclusion in the house of Mohassan Jamsetjee—even in Mellon's old room; the strange and weird means of her proposed escape on a bier; her capture by Pershad Sing, and all she had endured while in his power, were to be forgotten now, as she laid her head on Mellon's breast, and felt his protecting arm around her.

But they had only met to be separated again!

Acting as the advanced guard of the troops coming on from Umballa, Brigadier Sir Archdale Wilson, who had assumed the command of the small force in Meerut, marched it out of that place on the evening of the 30th of May, and attacked a great body of the mutineers who were posted within fifteen miles of Delhi.

Mellon joined the slender force of Europeans composed of various corps and civilian volunteers, who were added to his little band of Bengal Fusiliers, and the remnant of Harrower's company under Frank Temple.

He bade a hurried adieu to Kate, left her with many other ladies in tears, terror, and apprehension of the worst that could happen, and led on his men, who, with two companies of the 60th Rifles, four pieces of cannon, and a squadron of the Queen's Car-

bineers, were ordered to maintain, to their last bullet, the suspension bridge which crosses the river Hindoon; and then, for the first time since that evening by the Cashmere Gate, did he and others find themselves face to face, and ere long foot to foot, with their cruel and treacherous enemies.

Carefully trained and disciplined by the brave British officers they had assassinated in cold blood, armed with the perfection of Enfield muskets, and well skilled in their use, the sepoys were certainly formidable antagonists; they fought like dark demons, giving no quarter and asking none; and there in the sultry night, where the cannon boomed, and the lurid shells were bursting along the gorge of the Hindoon, in a combat lighted by the clear moon,—by the yellow glare of a burning village, and once most fatally by the explosion of an ammunition waggon, the work of death and of *Retribution* went sternly on!

The sepoys were led by their newly elected officers, by Baboo Bulli Sing, Nour-ad-deen Abraha al Ashram, and other Talookdars of the kingdom.

The blood of our men was roused to fever heat; a most un-British yearning for vengeance—but a just vengeance—fired every heart. Friends, relations, wives, mothers, and sisters—yea, and innocent little children, had perished all over India in a hundred terrible hecatombs, and in the hearts of our men there swelled up the divine assurance that God would give them power to punish and to be victorious over those who had destroyed so cruelly so many helpless Christian people.

Redly flashed the dreadful fire of musketry out of the wooded gorge and gloomy hollow, through which the Hindoon flows towards the Jumna, and its echoes mingled with the beating of drums, tom-toms, the roar of gongs, blowing of buffalo horns, and yells of "Deen! deen!" showing that many budmashes of the city were then among the more regular sepoy infantry.

"Remember the women! Remember the poor babies!" was the *cri de guerre* of the 60th Rifles, as they brought their bayonets to the charge, and hundreds of the enemy were shot down and bayonetted as they swept through them at Ghazee-udeen-Nugger, and drove the survivors in rout and terror back to Delhi, pursued by Colonels Custance and Rudkin, with the 6th Carbineers.

So furious was the advance of Wilson's slender force, that he defeated the enemy with the loss of only one officer and forty rank and file.

His troops halted at Aleepore, a village one day's march distant from Delhi, and three days after, Rowley Mellon, who had escaped without a scar, was sent back to Meerut, with a train of doolies, or hospital litters, bearing the wounded, the sick, and the sun-stricken. The latter were numerous, and he was compelled to

leave many by the wayside, to gasp out their last there, with opened veins and leech-covered temples.

Kate, who had seen him depart, and saw him return, only to depart for battle again, began to experience something of what the wife of a soldier in time of war, and more especially in front of the enemy, has to undergo; but ere Mellon rejoined, a happy circumstance occurred.

Some days had elapsed, and on the very morning that Mellon, two hours before daybreak, was parading in the half-destroyed, white cantonments (which cover four miles of plain), a few convalescents, with whom he was to march to the front, the unexpected sound of drums was heard, waking the echoes of the compounds, and the quarter-guards hurriedly got under arms.

Great then was his satisfaction on discovering that the new arrival was a battalion of Ghoorkhas (the hardy mountaineers of Nepaul, clad in scarlet uniform, with Scottish forage caps), and two companies of his own gallant regiment, which had disembarked from the Ganges; but his satisfaction expanded into astonishment and joy, when, by the light of three flambeaux, carried by native torch-bearers, he saw Harrower and Doyle, both in uniform, by the side of a litter, in which a lady was reclining.

For miles along the road had Lena been borne in a palanquin, by relays of four natives at a time, two in front and two behind, with the *bangey*, or bamboo pole, resting on their bare shoulders; and these had chaunted unwearyingly while they trotted on, a doggerel rhyme in her praise.

"She's light as a feather—Butherum!
But step ye together—Butherum!
A lady pretty and white—Butherum!
To carry her is a delight—Butherum!
But gently carry her—Butherum!
For the sahib-logue is to marry her,
Oho—Butherum!"*

This absurd chaunt made Lena laugh more than once, and the unwonted sound of her merriment was heard and recognised by Kate and Mellon.

Long—long did the reunited sisters weep in each other's arms; and it happened that the arrival of this new reinforcement enabled Mellon to delay, for a few happy hours, his departure for the army, from whence an officer, Horace Eversly, who was now serving with the staff corps, came back with orders from Brigadier Wilson to the effect that, as the projected attack on Delhi would too probably be a protracted operation, the whole of the women and children were to be sent to Ninee Tal, a place of safety among

* Be wary.

the hills near Almora, in the land of the faithful Ghoorkhas, more than one hundred and twenty miles in a straight line northward from Meerut.

"And now, Jack, for retribution!" said Mellon.

"Yes, Rowley," replied Harrower, with the stern joy of a brave and a grave man, "and the day we retake Delhi shall be, in more senses than one, a red letter one in the annals of the Indian army!"

"Where's your bungalow, Mellon?" said Doyle; "it is dying I am for a cheroot and a glass of bitter beer. By the holy St. Bridget! but we met that boat load of Ghoorkhas just in time, Rowley, for Jack and I were pretty well used up; a little more, and I believe we should have forgotten even the way to go to sleep."

Stirring and startling events crowded fast on each other now.

It seemed so hard—so very hard, to part again—Kate from her husband, and Lena from her lover, after all they had undergone; but the girls knew that they would be safer in the rear, and that those they loved would thus endure less anxiety in the coming strife. Thus, before the sisters could very fairly realize the fact that they were free from immediate peril, and before they had told each other even the half of their griefs and terrible experiences while separated, the sound of the Ghoorkhas' drums and fifes, with those of the Fusiliers, had died away on the road to Wilson's camp, and they—Lena and Kate—were proceeding, under an escort of poor, feeble soldiers, all more or less wounded and sickly, with a vast caravan of women and children, many of them widows and orphans, in covered bullock carts, palanquins, buggies (a foolish name for a mere cab), doolies, on horseback, or perched in the howdahs of elephants, towards the mountains of Almora.

Kate had in her care the orphan child whom sturdy Phil Ryder of the 32nd, had borne away from amid the carnage by the Cashmere Gate, where too probably the parents had perished. He only knew that his name was "little pet," or "mamma's boy;" so many a mother in that sorrowful caravan was kind to him, and though none could be to him like his own, the tender-hearted Safiyah did her best to fill her place.

Lena and Kate had every comfort now that could be afforded them; plenty of attendance, and the use of a carhanchie, or native carriage, drawn by bullocks, and covered by an awning, and at Almora they hoped to be almost as secure as if among the "Ditchers," as the people up country name those of Calcutta; yet each sister could remark in the other the hollow cheek, the haggard and hunted expression of eye, which showed what each had undergone since that eventful marriage morning.

After several days of severe travelling, they reached their place

of refuge, Nince Tal, that haven of rest so often mentioned with the most tender solicitude by many a poor soldier and civilian, whose wife and little ones spent there in safety the days and hours, the weeks and months, during which he was broiling and toiling in the trenches before Delhi, at the capture of Cawnpore, or in the long and weary defence of Lucknow.

There Lena and Kate, with other fugitives, remained for months, hearing only at intervals the varying stories of the innumerable conflicts that were being waged over all the vast empire of Bengal, and in that time only twice did letters reach them from those whom they loved, and who were then serving with the combined army that sought to humble the pride and punish the crimes of Mohammed of Delhi.

On the banks of a beautiful lake, under the shadow of snow-clad mountains, twenty-six thousand feet in height, and not far from the borders of Nepaul, guarded by convalescent soldiers, and by the European gentlemen of the station, enrolled as volunteers, under a captain named Ramsay, the fugitives of that portion of the army, pallid and worn women, and tender little children, were safe even from Dacoits, Goojurs, Thugs, and other pests of India, especially while a regiment of Ghoorkhas held all the roads that led thereto; for these hardy warriors are of Mongol origin, and though worshippers of Brahma, after a free and easy fashion of their own, have no sympathies whatever with the effeminate Hindoos of the plains, being jolly little fellows, who eat everything that can be cooked, and never drink water when arrack or brandy can be had.

So there the sisters lingered, with torn hearts, while the distant strife went on, and none could yet foresee how it was to end.

The wet season came; the snows melted on the peaks of Ramee; the bright green rice in August was just visible above the soil of the plains; the topes of mangoes and palms waved their dark foliage on the mountain breezes; the gorgeous flowers, the birds and butterflies, were brilliant in hue as ever; but it seemed to the poor refugees, as they dwelt there amid the wilds of Nepaul, that they were almost forgotten by that external world, in which they had lately played a part so stirring; and yet the last thoughts of many a brave fellow, as he gave up his soul to God from the field of battle, were with those who pined by the beautiful Lake of Nince Tal.

The sisters were in mourning now, having long since taught themselves to number "papa and Polly with the dead;" but their time was not passed in idleness, for, with hundreds of other ladies and women of all ranks, they worked in common, making flannels, shirts, lint, and bandages for our soldiers at the siege of Delhi.

After they had been two months at Ninee Tal, a letter reached Lena from Harrower. It briefly stated that he and Mellon were well; that Doyle had been wounded, and that they had obtained sure tidings of Polly and Doctor Weston. She was in the royal zenana of Delhi, and he confined either in the palace or the Selinghur Fort; but that the general commanding was confident of achieving the freedom of both.

"There are no tidings yet of little Willie or Dicky Rivers—so I fear that we must anticipate the worst," continued the letter. "Since we have been parted, I have seen many a sight, such as I hope shall never again meet my eyes: but the deaths by which our people have perished, and are perishing, are accompanied by such indescribable horrors, that our hearts are hardened—maddened, dearest Lena, and 'kill—kill—kill all!' are the words in every man's mouth; and queer figures we cut as we go at the fellows in our shirt-sleeves, with pith helmets, long brown Cawnpore boots, and pantaloons of any kind save those ordered by the Horse Guards."

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE ARMY OF RETRIBUTION.

IN the first week of June, the united army of retribution—for so it may justly be styled—under General Sir Henry Barnard, K.C.B., an officer who had led a brigade in the Crimea, and to the capture of Sebastopol, appeared before Delhi; but these united forces from Meerut and Umballa, though divided into three brigades, under Halifax, Jones, and Wilson, were few in number, and thus were quite unfitted to invest or attack a city so vast, so strong, and so well defended by a great body of well-drilled and appointed native troops, flushed as they were by slaughter, plunder, and excess, inflamed by religious fanaticism, and knowing too that all of them, from Mohammed, the King, down to the lowest caste Hindoo, fought with a felon's halter round his neck.

Barnard pitched his camp on the parade grouud of the old cantonments, which are described in our opening chapters, between the race-course and a ridge of rocks that overhang the city. On his left was the Flagstaff Tower; ou his right was the mansion of a Mahratta chief (known as Hindoo Rao), having a handsome portico of eight pillars; iu his centre was an old mosque.

Mellon and Doyle were with their regiment, in the first brigade; while Harrower, with his few Light Infantry men, was attached to the 60th Rifles, in the brigade of Wilson, and consequeutly had his post near the pucka-built house of Hindoo Rao.

During all these events and adventures which have been related, Jack's regiment, under Brigadier Iuglis, was engaged in and about Lucknow, assisting bravely iu his heroic defence of that place, which is more than two hundred and eighty miles lower down the proviuces than Delhi.

Harrower's escape aud arrival iu camp made some uoise at the time, for he had been a popular guest at all the mess bungalows, aud was well known for his dashing bravery iu some of the more receut Indiau battles, particularly at Moultan and Goojerat. Many came to welcome aud congratulate him; among others, Rudkin, with his cold, stately manner, and perpetual smile; and Jack felt that he could freely forgive and shake the haud of the Colonel *now*.

The army was almost without cannon, till it captured a few from the enemy in a battle fought at Bardulla Serai, a village withiu four miles of the city, where the Bengal Fusiliers and the Queen's 75th regimeut charged over the open ground which was swept by the cannonade, and rushing on at a rapid double, shot down or bayoneted the gholaudazees, and seized their guns for service against the city.

Doyle, with a few of the Fusiliers, pursued the fugitives close to the Cabul Gate, and was rewarded for his ardour by a bullet in the calf of his left leg. "Among the articles captured here," says Nolan, "was a covered cart, supposed to contain ammunition, but which when examiued, was found to be filled with the mangled limbs and trunks of Christians slaughtered during the insurrection within the city and cautonments."

Too probably this was the waggon with the remains of the 54th officers, left by Colouel Rudkin near the Flagstaff Tower, a month before.

For weeks and months the toil of besieging Delhi went on, with burning heat, sunstrokes, cholera, jungle-fever, wounds and slaughter; and there amid the white plain stood the proud defiant city, under the scorching sun of the Indian sumuer—Delhi of Homaion and the Moguls—its white marble domes and mina-

rets glowing and apparently vibrating by day, or gleaming coldly under the pallid lustre of the moon and stars, by night, till day would dawn again, and once more tower and mosque would seem to quiver in the wavy lines of heat; for the atmosphere was like that of an open furnace, and the air grew thick with mosquitos and clouds of white, whirling dust. But by night and by day, the boom—boom—boom of the great cannon from all its bastions, and from the batteries raised against them, went ceaselessly on, while garlands of fire—the red, flashing fire of the sharp Enfield rifles, wreathed the lofty walls, or spouted out from among the beautiful gardens, the rich foliage, the tombs, detached villas, the ruins of ancient times, and all along the ridge of rocks on which the old cantonments stood, and from whence the river, under its bridge of boats, could be seen winding away for miles, through the plains of Rohilcund.

Every day saw some deed of heroic valour performed either by the enemy or the army of Retribution, which was slowly but steadily pressing closer and closer to the beleaguered city. "While rebellion, treachery, and murder, were stalking through the fairest provinces of Hindostan," says the editor of the *Delhi Gazette;* "while regiment after regiment was falling away from its allegiance—while brave men were being tortured or shot down by their own companions in arms—while comely matrons and delicate maidens were being subjected to mutilation and the vilest indignities—while little children were being torn asunder or hewed to pieces—while humanity was everywhere being outraged, and government set at nought—the little army before Delhi held its ground, and like a murderer's conscience, grimly assured the mutineers of a certain and terrible *retribution!*"

"To-morrow is the first of August," said Eversly, who had ridden from the Staff head-quarters, to the post of the 60th Rifles, near Hindoo Rao's house; "and as the general confidently expects those fellows in the city to make some great demonstration, the whole army shall remain under arms all night, and so be prepared for anything."

"And why particularly to-morrow?" asked Frank Temple, handing the Aide-de-Camp a bottle of Bass's pale ale, which was as dear in camp as sparkling Moselle had been a few weeks before.

"It is the festival of the Eed, whatever the deuce that may be, and these Mohammedan desperados are certain to attempt something in the shape of row," replied Eversly, as he threw aside his solar-topee, and stretched himself on the grass which formed the carpet of Harrower's tent or hut, for his residence partook of the nature of both, being constructed of large branches, palm leaves, and the cover of a bullock-waggon.

"Queer bunk, this, Horace; isn't it?" said Jack, who was seated on an empty ammunition-keg, and smoking in his shirt-sleeves.

"Rather!" drawled Eversly; "think of civilized men living in huts of mud, leaves, and bamboo cane!"

"A power sight better do that, than to die in them," said the contented Pat Doyle, who was nursing his wounded leg; "confess that it is, Horace, you Anglo-Saxon Sybarite?"

"A Sybarite—by Jove!" ejaculated the once fashionable Eversly, who was now attired in a very singular costume indeed, a loose white cotton blouse, a pair of wide, baggy, red cotton breeches, long, buff, Cawnpore boots that came above the knee, with a shawl thrown over his shoulder, and a blue veil round his cork solar-topee. His beard had grown to a most patriarchal length, and his hands, whilom so daintily covered with the finest of kid gloves, were now burned by the sun and exposure, to a more than Eurasian tint. "Did a Sybarite ever dress thus, Doyle?"

"It is so long since I dipped into Strabo or Pliny at Old Trinity, that I can't say," replied Doyle; "but it's mighty ill off I am now, for all the wardrobe I have in this blessed world, is a patrol jacket made out of the cover of a billiard-table—by the same token, it belonged to your 54th mess—a shirt, or rather the collar of it; the better part of a pair of breeches made out of a chintz coverlet, a sword and a revolver, and these are all, barrin' a bullet wound in the leg—bad luck to it! But it's some pretty pickings I'll have once we are inside that same Delhi, or my name is not Pat Morris Doyle!" he added, viciously striking right and left on the grass with an empty beer-bottle to kill the mosquitos that were buzzing about him.

"One thing is certain," said Temple, as he handed his cigar-case round, "if we do not take Delhi before our reinforcements arrive from Bombay or Madras—to say nothing of Europe—we shall be destroyed piecemeal by sunstroke, fever, or the bullet, for these Pandies fight like devils, and we have already more than three thousand men on the sick list."

"But reinforcements are coming up country fast," said Eversly; "we expect the 78th Highlanders daily."

"Highlanders—whoop!" cried Doyle, "I wonder how their crural extremities will fare among these clouds of mosquitos that bother us so."

"If we repulse a sortie of those fellows to-morrow night," said Harrower, "we might follow them pell-mell into the heart of the place and so make pretty play with the bayonet."

"Wilson half anticipates some such movement; but we are only strong enough as you see, to invest Delhi on one side, while

the other remains open to recruiting and supplies. Once in, we shall not forget the General's order."

"No, Horace," said Harrower grimly; "I have committed to heart that portion of it where he says, 'Major-General Wilson need hardly remind the troops that *no quarter* should be given to the mutineers; at the same time, for the sake of humanity and the honour of our country, he calls upon them to spare all women and children who may come in their way.' But I would to Heaven that all this butcherly work were over," added Jack, whose heart was far away at Ninee Tal; "so thick are the graves of Europeans and native round us now that the camp is horrible, and the moment the sun sets, then we have the exasperating howls of the jackals."

"Here's a dead Hindo-o-o-o-o! Where—where—where? Here—here—here!" cried Doyle, imitating the jackal, and making them laugh, for when intoned, its howl sounds oddly enough, very like those words.

"You must have hard work of it, just now, you fellows of the staff corps," observed Harrower.

"Hard work—by Jove, I should think so, Jack," replied Eversly; "we sleep nightly booted and belted."

"But so do we all."

"Well," rejoined Eversly, "I think, as Shakespeare says somewhere, that 'as I cannot last for ever, it were better to be eaten to death with rust, than scoured to death by perpetual motion;' and truly I am weary of this perpetual work—all danger, and neither gain nor glory.'

"You should remember, Horace, that we—the Army of Retribution—must value neither."

"Well, old fellow, another glass of pale ale, and then I must be off to the next brigade," said the aide-de-camp, "for to-morrow night may find us involved in a sharp shindy, and providing other bones than those of the Hindoos for the jackals to prey on."

Eversly had referred to Delhi being open on one side; thus it was that on the 2nd of July, the besiegers had the mortification to see five entire regiments and a battery of artillery—the cruel mutineers of Bareilly, Moradabad, and Shahjehanpore, cross the Jumna and march into the city, with all their colours flying and bands playing.

By the time of the Eed, the roads leading to Delhi—particularly that one from Kurnaul—were littered with the dead carcases of horses, camels, and bullocks, with black clouds of flies, and flocks of croaking vultures hovering over them, their skins, after bleaching in the rains of June, being dried to mere parchment under the fierce sun of July. Ruins of houses, mosques, and old tombs,

all riddled by round shot, or starred by musket-balls, told that each had been, and might be again, the scene of a deadly skirmish, and among them lay the whitened skeletons of many a man and horse, while over all the ground were shreds and fragments of red and blue cloth, belts and accoutrements, with the white paper of expended cartridges whirling in clouds upon the breeze.

The groves of lofty peepul trees, of mangoes and beautiful date palms around the city, were all lopped bare, stripped or torn to pieces by the showers of round shot, grape, and musketry that were exchanged in the attack and defence of the walls and bastions.

As in the "Curse of Kehama,"

> "The rice roots by the scorching sun were dried;
> And in lean groups, assembled at the side
> Of the empty tank, the cattle dropt and died;
> And famine, at her bidding, wasted wide
> The wretched land; till, in the public way,
> Promiscuous where the dead and dying lay,
> Dogs fed on human bones in the open light of day."

On the 5th of July, the brave Sir Henry Barnard died; Reed, his successor, resigned in ill-health, and then the entire command devolved on Sir Archdale Wilson.

Eversly's costume, as we have described it, was a fair average specimen of that worn by the army before Delhi. Individual taste, exigency, and the study of comfort, had all full play now. Regimentals in general, and pipe-clay in particular, had almost disappeared. Save by his weapons, a Lancer could scarcely be known from a Hussar or Fusilier, and nearly all the Infantry, Ghoorkhas and Rifles included, wore frocks and trousers of blue slate-coloured linen, and caps covered with white puggerees of the same material, as a protection from the sun; but helmets of pith or wicker-work, with numerous escape-holes, and long buff Cawnpore boots, were in the greatest request among the officers.

As reinforcements came in, the camp assumed a gayer and more varied aspect; there were the scarlet uniforms of the newly arrived Europeans, the flowing white attire of the Sikhs, and the gaudy, parti-coloured dresses of the Rampore Cavalry, the Patau Horse from Nepaul, and other natives, who, through fear, interest, or the love of lucre—or perhaps, while only waiting the tide of events for fresh treachery and bloodshed, followed the army of Brigadier Wilson.

As yet, he was without a proper siege-train.

If, for a time, the din of cannonading ceased, the silence of the camp, especially at night, would be broken only by the mono-

tonous tramping and chaunts of the doolie-bearers, as they bore the wounded to the rear, with the red curtains down, amid the howling of herds of jackals, in tope and jungle, anticipating a feast, as their sharp noses scented the blood that dripped through the seams on the ground.

When the camp was short of provisions, it was Harrower's good fortune to secure a herd of sacred bulls and cows—an entire herd consecrated to Brahma, as their capital condition, sleek curry-combed sides, and horns all painted and gilded, made apparent.

From the park of a wealthy Rajah close by, he brought them all into camp, where they were shot down, cut up, and served out to the troops, who had thus an excellent repast on the night of the anticipated sortie—the festival of the Eed.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE NIGHT OF THE EED.

THE mutineers in Delhi now consisted of those from Oude, the Doab, Bundelcund, Sealkote, Bareilly, and Rohilcund, whence they were sent by the Ranee of Jhansi, an Indian princess, who in person ordered the slaughter of forty Christian mothers and their children; from Paniput, Kurnaul, and rascals from many other places, mustering in all twenty thousand horse and foot, while the British were barely a third of that number.

"Aha!" said the old King of Delhi to Zeenat Mahal, his favourite sultana, when the Bareilly regimeuts marched in, with their bands playing, absurdly enough, "The Laird of Cockpen," "The British Grenadiers," and other airs, which their officers had taught them, "those English Kaffirs could make roads of iron, and iron fire-horses, but they have lost India by a single cartridge —the fools! the sons of burnt fathers!"

The festival of the Eed (like that of the Mohurrum, at a later period) was awaited with anxiety, as it is a solemn one amoug the Mohammedans, who hold it as the anniversary of the sacrifice

which Abraham intended to make of Ishmael and *not* of Isaac, the former being at that time, as the Imams and Moulvies maintain, his only son, whom in a vision repeated on three successive nights he was ordained to offer up as a human offering to God.

It was the night of the 1st of August, the close of a hot and steamy day in the wet season, when the desperadoes in Delhi sought to commemorate this festival by an attempt to turn General Wilson's flank, and get into our rear.

"Turn out, Harrower—there go the bugles!" cried Temple, putting his head inside Jack's wigwam; "those fellows are in motion now."

"Are the 60th falling in?"

"Yes, and our handful too, for we are all to go the front. If the siege train was only up, what a night this would be for an escalade!"

"All right, Frank; I'll be with you in a minute, old fellow," replied Harrower.

He closed and carefully sealed and addressed a letter he had been writing, lest he might not be spared to return, for a brave man is always prepared for the worst. It was that missive for Lena at Ninee Tal to which he afterwards added the paragraph that closes a recent chapter. He then took his sword and pistols and hastened to put himself at the head of his little party, which consisted now of little more than Sergeant Philip Ryder and twenty rank and file.

From their cowardice or incapacity, or for both defects of character, old Mohammed, of Delhi, was compelled to relieve his sons and grandson of all military service, and to confide the command to the leader of the Bareilly mutineers, who began to act with unusual vigour.

He had attempted to get a train of guns across the Jumna by means of a temporary bridge, for the purpose of cannonading Wilson's rear; but in this he was baffled by the force of the stream, which swept the frail edifice away, and on the evening of the 2nd he commenced an attack along the whole line of our batteries with round shot, grape, shrapnel shells, and musketry.

In the dark the incessant flashing of the exploding bombs and the red flare of the cannon from bastion and embrasure, with the volleying of the rifles along the far extent of city wall, and from the ridge of rocks that formed the British position, had a wonderful effect. Then to the din of all these were added the strange, wild yells of the Mohammedans and Hindoos, blending at times with the united cheers of the besiegers; and so the strife was waged amid pitchy darkness, but so much at random that when day dawned only twenty-two of Wilson's force had been killed and wounded, while more than two hundred of the foe lay dead before his breastworks.

So passed the night of the Eed.

Intrenched behind a bank of earth near Hindoo Rao's house, and amid a frightful atmosphere, produced by dead bodies hastily interred, Harrower's men had kept up a steady fire for nearly the whole night, repelling several attacks on their position, and when day was breaking their pouches were well-nigh empty, and all their percussion-caps expended. Their fire then slackened and gradually ceased, on which a lingering party of the enemy, composed of about a hundred sepoys of various regiments, led apparently by a Dervish and Budmash of the city, once more made a dash at their position.

The latter personage, who bore a tulwar and round shield of buffalo hide studded with gilded bosses, and who was clad in a scarlet silk koortagh over a light muslin shirt, with a yellow chintz sheet floating from his shoulders, a green turban and Cashmere cummerbund full of weapons, made himself particularly active.

"Victory to Mohamed Bahadoor Shah!" he was crying. "Shout—shout, oh, ye army of the Faithful, for Allah will yet destroy these curs of Kaffirs!"

"Now, lads, come on with the bayonet," cried Harrower, leaping sword in hand out of the trench, where he and his men had been under arms all night. Fixing their bayonets as they scrambled after him, his little party of the 32nd formed in rank entire, and made a rush upon the followers of the Budmash, who had been rash enough to linger after all the rest had fallen back under cover of the city guns. "Remember the women and children," added Jack; "though they are five to one, come on, for vengeance and the Victoria cross!"

The sepoys, who were destitute of real moral courage when opposed hand to hand to armed Europeans, fired a confused volley which knocked over two of Harrower's men with wounds more or less severe, but the rest dashed on with bayonets charged, and slew many without mercy.

The dervish, who disdained to seek safety in flight, believing infallibly in his *kismet*, or destiny, was roughly knocked down by Phil Ryder's clubbed rifle, and lay still as if dead; but the Budmash, who had been the first to fly, stumbled and fell on his face, rolling over several times in frantic attempts to get on his feet and to escape the bayonets that were being thrust at him.

"Shoot the scoundrel!" cried Ryder. "Is there one cartridge left among you?"

"Bayonet him—bayonet him!"

"Club your firelock, Bob, and polish the Pandy off!" cried others. Thrice their bayonets were deeply lodged, not in his body, but in the turf, as the Indian, in his terror and activity, bounded and tumbled wildly about.

"Stay, lads," said Harrower, "I think I should know this fel-

low. Lie still, or get up and speak," he added, in Hindostanee, giving the seeming Budmash a most unpleasantly vigorous kick. "Are you not Assim Alee, who was the chief valet of Dr. Weston?"

"Ye—yes, sahib," replied the other, gasping and pea-green with terror as he was dragged up, shaken on his feet, and disarmed by the soldiers.

Harrower's brow grew very black indeed, and there was a dangerous gleam in his eyes as he glanced round for a convenient gallows.

"What have you to urge, fellow, that I should not hang you from the branch of that mango-tree?"

"Much have I to say that you might like to hear, sahib," replied the other, folding his palms together, and veiling the snake-like spite and hate that twinkled in his eyes, under the usual cringing demeanour of the Bengalee domestic.

"That I should like to hear, fellow—how?"

"I can tell you where the Padre Weston and Miss Baba Polly are now—now at this moment."

"You can?" asked Harrower, starting.

Assim Alee salaamed and pressed his hands more closely together.

"Then where?" demanded Harrower, drawing the revolver from his belt, a motion which the ex-kitmutgar regarded with nervousness.

"Promise me life," he whined.

"I promise nothing. Tie his hands, Ryder, and take him to the rear. Yet why should I trifle or delay?" added Harrower, pausing and looking at the mango-tree. "Speak at once—where are they? Speak, or I shall instantly have you put to death!"

"In the Delhi Palace."

"Safe?"

"Quite safe, sahib."

"What proof have I of this?"

"Ask the dervish lying yonder, if he be not dead, and he will tell you the same thing, for Hafiz Falladeen never lies."

The dervish, who was only stunned, and who had lost his beloved snake in the recent fray, was speedily shaken up and securely tied to the kitmutgar, after which they were dragged away to the house of Hindoo Rao, where Harrower had them brought before the general for an examination which took place in the drawing-room.

The once gorgeous furniture had all been destroyed, but the frescoes on the walls remained untouched; among these were paintings of a Bengal tiger rending a white man in a red coat (a favourite and significant design of Tippoo Sahib), Vishnu with a seven-headed and manifold snake curling about him, and with the

lotus leaf, in the flower of which lurks the spirit of Brahma, the creator-god, and all around were peacocks and monkeys, with grotesque episodes out of the sacred Puranias.

The treacherous valet, whom we have hitherto omitted to describe, was a tall, wiry, and muscular man, with long jaws, thin cruel lips, a nose high and aquiline, eyes black as sloes, and large and deeply set. His brows were beetling and shaggy; his beard was long, and fell on his shoulders now in sable masses, from under a green turban, which he had adopted in virtue of his alleged descent from the Prophet of Mecca; but the whole expression of his face combined intense craft with greed and cruelty.

On being examined in his native language, he assured Mellon, Harrower, and the General, with a group of officers, who listened eagerly (for over all that had happened in Delhi there hung as yet a veil of horror and mystery), that the Doctor and his youngest daughter were taken into the Delhi Palace on the day the mutineers arrived from Meerut; that he had been guiding them to the Flagstaff Tower, when Baboo Bulli Sing came out with five hundred armed men, and carried them off; that he had received in defence of his master three desperate wounds, which he was ready to show (as he had really received them when brawling in a drinking khan), and he added many more free sketches of his own faith and deep grief for the loss of his beloved master, who was now confined in the tower near the Sallyport, while Missy Polly was in the royal zenana of Mirza Abubeker.

Dark glances were exchanged among the group of officers on hearing all this, and many remarks were muttered far from complimentary to the scion of the house of Tamerlane.

"Take this whining fellow to the quarter-guard, and there keep him securely until further orders," said the General. "Bring in the dervish."

Hafiz Falladeen, though a religious mendicant, and a great reader of the Koran, as his first name imports, had not been improved by the excesses and orgies of the past months. His filthy orange-coloured shirt still partially covered his lean and meagre person; his grizzled hair was matted and greased as usual; but his cheeks were woefully hollow and haggard; his hands trembled in the iron fetters that were linked over them; his bloodshot eyes had the wild and restless glare of those of a hunted hyæna, and he strove to hide under a calm exterior the hate and loathing of his captors—a sentiment, in its intensity, bordering on insanity.

However, he confirmed beyond a doubt that the poor clergyman and his younger daughter were still alive and in the palace; in short, that he had seen both only yesterday—the former through the bars of the prison in which he was lying, feeble and ill, on a

poor charpoy, or native bed; and the other, when walking in the garden of the zenana, leaning on the arm of a gholaum, or female slave.

"What matter is it about a girl—a woman?" asked the dervish, with bitter scorn; "does not the Prophet tell us, in the blessed Koran—so surely as the poor shall enter Paradise, five hundred years before the rich (comfort for thee and me, Assim Alee), that when he looked down into hell he saw that the greater part of the wretches there were women—and so, as it was revealed at Mecca, shall it be!"

"Take him also to the quarter-guard, Sergeant Ryder, and let him be securely watched," said the General. "If you have deceived us in all this, dervish, I shall blow you, and a score of other black wretches, from the guns to-morrow!"

"Taunt us not with our colour," replied the dervish, in his guttural accent. "Know you not, O Kafir Aga, that when God made man, he sent the angels Gabriel, Michael, and Israel, to fetch him seven handfuls of earth from seven different depths, and each of seven different colours? These he kneaded into the body of Adam, our common father—and hence the varied complexions of men."

"Yes, but where was the memory of our common father when in the mosques and bazaars you urged the slaughter of our helpless women and innocent children?" asked Harrower, sternly.

"Soubadar, whose dog are you that you seek to question me? I did so because it was revealed at Mecca that they were the children and wives of idolaters, whose time had come," replied the dervish, firm in his terrible faith. "'Unto every nation,' saith the Prophet, in the chapter *Al araf*, 'there is prefixed a term of existence, which no one can anticipate or protract even for an instant,' and so it hath come about that the term of your rule among us hath passed away."

"The devil it has!—well, we shall see," said the General, impatiently; "away with this old humbug to the quarter-guard! and now, gentlemen, I shall have the pleasure of consulting with you about the information we have so luckily received."

"May I venture to suggest, General, that a flag of truce might be sent to the nearest gate of the city to require the surrender of those two survivors of the late massacre?" said Harrower; "and may I add, that if you will permit me——"

"Nay, my dear fellow," said Rowley Mellon, pressing forward; "as the son-in-law of Doctor Weston, I think this duty should be mine."

Harrower coloured with vexation; but ere the General could speak——

"Gentlemen," said Colonel Rudkin, with his calm smile, "if so

dangerous a duty as bearing a flag of truce must be performed, I claim that honour."

"Why?" asked Mellon, with knitted brows.

"As your senior officer," was the somewhat lofty reply.

"A duty of peril it will be," said the General, "as I don't believe those fellows will respect even a green flag, then how much less so a white one!"

"That matters little to me," replied Colonel Rudkin; "I shall be its bearer."

"You, Colonel!" exclaimed Harrower, with a keen and suspicious, almost stern expression of eye, which Rudkin and Mellon alone understood.

"Yes, Captain Harrower," replied the Colonel, with his imperturbable smile; "I am quite unaware of any reason why I should *not* be of service to Doctor Weston and his family."

"Having been," Jack was beginning, in a passionate and blundering way——

"Like yourself, an old and valued friend," added Rudkin gently, assuming his white pith helmet.

Harrower was vanquished; but he started as if a wasp had stung him. He could not for the life of him know whether or not Rudkin was indulging in a covert sneer; but he could only gnaw his nether lip under his thick moustache, while the General said—

"Mellon, you are a good Hindostanee scholar; assume the pen, please, and write a missive, addressed to the King of Delhi, demanding the instant release of the two prisoners, if he would save forty of his principal people, now in our hands, from being blown from the cannon's mouth to-morrow. Write to dictation, and I shall give you the tenor of the document."

"At which gate shall I deliver it, General?" asked Colonel Rudkin, buckling on his sword.

"The nearest—there is no time to be lost."

"Good—then the Cabul Gate be it."

In less than half an hour after this, just as the heat of day was past, and a hasty tiffin had been discussed, Harrower and Mellon, with some pardonable envy, saw Colonel Mark Rudkin, accompanied by a trumpeter of the 6th Dragoon Guards, bearing a white handkerchief tied to the point of a hogspear, depart on his errand of mercy, and ride deliberately over the open ground, and among the scattered gardens that lie between Hindoo Rao's house and the city, a distance of exactly one mile.

All cannonading had ceased; the atmosphere was close and still, and the city with its white walls, seemed as usual vibrating, to all appearance, in the hot scorching sunshine, while the bearers of the flag of truce were permitted quietly to ride straight up to the Cabul Gate, the ramparts and round towers on each side of

which, were lined by dark foes looking curiously on. Some were laughing, and, while hiding their loaded muskets below the parapet, cried mockingly—

"Chulo sahibs—chulo sahibs, ha! ha!"—(*i. e.* "Come on gentlemen—gentlemen, come on.")

When within half pistol range of the gate, the trumpeter sounded a parley, while the Colonel raised himself in his stirrups, and displaying the large official missive, said in a loud voice—

"A letter for his majesty, the Padishah—for Mohamed Bahadoor of Delhi, in the name of her majesty the Queen of Britain."

The Colonel spoke the purest Hindostanee and was distinctly heard; so, after a few minutes, the great Cabul Gate opened slowly, and several sepoys appeared in uniform with their bayonets glittering in the sun, and led by two native officers wearing their gilt fringe epaulettes, and double collars of gold beads round their necks.

These beckoned the Colonel forward. Their uniforms were faced with bright yellow, for they belonged to the *Soolteen-ka-Pultan*, or 3rd Bengal Infantry—a regiment which had been exactly a hundred years in existence. Rudkin had served with them at Goojerat, so he rode confidently forward; and he was just in the act of handing the letter to the nearest officer, when a sepoy stepped behind him, levelled his rifle and shot him through the head!

The unfortunate Rudkin fell dead and his terrified horse galloped away towards Kishena Gunge. Tossing aside the violated flag of truce, the carbineer trumpeter escaped a volley by the speed of his charger; but as he looked back, he saw the body of Rudkin pierced uselessly and rancorously by many a bayonet, as it was dragged into the city, after which the Cabul Gate was shut.

A bitter imprecation escaped the usually quite Jack Harrower, on witnessing this atrocious crime through his field-glass.

"Poor Rudkin!" he exclaimed. "Oh, Rowley, we have both had a narrow escape."

The letter was forwarded to the palace, but no answer was ever returned; and from thenceforward no more flags of truce went near the walls of Delhi.

This event raised the temper of the army to fever heat, and with earnest joy it welcomed the arrival of the siege train, consisting of forty heavy guns and mortars, which, with a vast supply of ammunition, came into camp on the morning of the 4th of August, escorted by a wing of her Majesty's 8th Foot, two companies of the 61st and the 1st Battalion of Belooches, bold and resolute Highlanders from the rugged Alps of Kohistan.

On the 7th, the Punjab Infantry came in, and by the 13th, as

Jack wrote in one of his letters to Lena, "The breaching batteries were all in working order, and it did one's heart good to hear the big guns with lurid flashes in the hot and humid air pounding away day and night against the Cashmere Gate and Water Bastion. In twelve hours more we expect the breaches to be practicable, as the walls are falling in enormous masses, and then, Lena—then for the escalade, and a terrible requital of the past!"

CHAPTER LXVIII.

A MARTYR.

POLLY who, on reflection, had bitterly repented of acquainting Abubeker with the information she had received from the serpent-charmer, was soon after told by him that "her sister and the white sahib had fled across a tributary of the Jumna, and could not be overtaken; moreover, it was confidently believed by the fakir and the havildar that the latter had been drowned."

This was all that Polly could learn of the fate of those so dear to her; and the prince did not add that the non-commissioned officer had been, by order of Mogul, hung by the neck in the Kotwally for returning without Lena.

Hoping to rouse Polly from the painful apathy and listlessness which oppressed her, he had her removed from her solitary apartment and placed among the other girls in the zenana, where her arrival and appearance excited much surprise and comment among the copper-coloured Odalisques, who were chiefly the daughters of zemindars of Delhi and Talookdars of Oude.

They were glittering with ornaments, rings, and precious stones, especially on their slender throats and wrists, with massive bangles on the ankles, while Polly Weston was without other adornment than the masses of her golden hair, threats and persuasion having alike failed in prevailing on her to wear the splendid gifts, emeralds like bunches of grapes on stems of gold,

and so forth, which the servants of Abubeker heaped on trays before her.

With the light-hearted Hindoo girls—for many of them were daughters of Brahma—she felt more security (but this was fancy only) than in the *cuchuc-oda*, or chamber in which the newly arrived inmates of the zenana are first placed. Among those poor girls who were at first disposed to mock and envy her, Polly's innocence, her artlessness, and exceeding gentleness soon won every heart; and they even caressed and strove to soothe her by assurances of coming glory and the happiness of future years, pressing her to remember how different might have been her fate.

Had not the Nana Sahib at Cawnpore, that very week, slain the Christian women by hundreds and flung them into a well, because not one of them would enter his zenana?

It was only when they called her "Nour Mahal," that she became irritated, for the name seemed a mere mockery of her state.

"Nour Mahal!" she would repeat with loathing; "oh, it sounds like a fragment of an Arabian Tale or a Christmas pantomime, blended with a chaos of misery."

Was she the same Polly Weston—the once happy and heedless girl whom every one admired, petted, and liked, and who had flirted with all the little ensigns and cadets in Delhi? or was this sudden transition from the civilization of an English home, to Oriental splendour and barbarism, a madness that had come upon her?

The Odalisques overwhelmed her with questions about the Feringhee women; asking if it could be true that they rode horses, drove ekhas, walked arm-in-arm with men, talked to men, and oh, Mohamed! danced with men, which even the Nautch girls do not do? If each Feringhee man was the husband of only one wife, acting thereby like a very shabby fellow? They were astonished that she did not wear a ring through one nostril (like themselves) with a string of pearls thereto; and all, even the fair Cashmerees, laughed openly at her for "being so *white*."

One asked her if England was a large city, and how many gates it had; if the Begum of the land made all the greased cartridges herself? how many heads she cut off in a day? and so forth; while sometimes Abubeker, who was perfectly well educated and knew better, sat by on a carpet smoking his hookah in which the rose-water bubbled, and laughing heartily at Polly's annoyance or perplexity and the wonder of his fair recluses.

Passive in their hands, so far, Polly permitted them to anoint her beautiful golden hair in the Indian fashion with *Chymbele*, a distillation of jasmine much affected by native women; but she

resisted their attempts—as her eyebrows were brown—to blacken her lashes with kohol, or to redden the ends of her fingers with henna till they would resemble coral, as they wished them to do.

She tossed angrily aside the rich dresses in which they sought to decorate her, that she might still further please the eye of Abubeker. They brought her slippers embroidered with pearls and gold, without heels and with curled up toes; but she threw them aside also in disgust, remembering the tiny kid boots, high in heel and fitting smoothly to the white stocking, the slender ankle, and the arched instep that poor Dicky Rivers adored, as he had told her a hundred times.

Polly felt most at peace when night came, and she was left to her prayers and her own reflections. Her father yet lived, for so had Abubeker told her till he was weary, but adding ominously:—

"How long he may have life, depends upon yourself—your love alone can prolong it."

Little Polly frequently wondered whether her kind mamma, who was in Heaven, saw her sufferings and knew the fate of her three daughters and of their father—that good mamma who lay in peace in the churchyard of dear Thorpe Audley. How often had she, and Kate, and Lena, lingered near that venerated grave and decorated it with flowers, feeling a melancholy yet soothing joy in the conviction that by so doing they might be pleasing an immortal spirit, and that they were closely linked to one who was beside God; and when their father prayed they had marvelled if his voice from the old oak pulpit of the village church was heard by good mamma in Heaven—that same old church in which they had so often knelt by her side, and in childhood had trembled so bashfully when repeating their catechism on Easter Sunday.

Her past existence and her present were so different as to give her almost the Hindoo idea of a duality of life, and of that power of metempsychosis which forms a portion of the creed of Brahma.

Listlessness, illness, and languor still hung over her, so Abubeker had her sometimes conveyed to a beautiful gilded kiosk in the gardens of the palace, where were yet remaining the ponds and marble tanks wherein the Empress of Shah Jehan fed her tame fish and had fillets of gold put round them. Those plantations of Delhi, though beautiful as the "Garden of Delights," which Zobeide bet against the "Palace of Pictures," belonging to Haraun al Raschid, surpass all others in India for beauty; but for Polly they had no charm save their vastness and solitude; for in the cool kiosk no sound could reach her but the voice of the pagoda thrush, so named as it delivers its song of melody from the sacred tree, and she loved to see the green and purple butter-

flies floating among the gorgeous flowers and the golden fruit of the orange groves.

There would Polly spend many a listless day, reclining on a divan with a little female gholaum kneeling near, to fan her pale face with the wings of an argus-pheasant.

One day her solitude was broken by Mirza Abubeker, who, dismissing the gholaum, seated himself by her side, to press his suit, to which the novelty of her aversion gave every hour a greater piquancy.

A shuddering sigh of intense loathing escaped her, and she muffled her little hands in the ample folds of her muslin dress, lest he might presume to touch them with his cold, fat, flabby, and begemmed fingers. Yet this man had marked her for preservation, from an early period of the great conspiracy, and had chosen to save her when so many other European women and girls had perished miserably in that ever memorable week of May, which seemed to have passed years ago.

But there were times when this shrinking from him in eye and manner, and this aspect of helpless innocence, enraged rather than pained or piqued the imperious Mogul prince.

"Still this repugance!" said he, in good English; "how often must I remind you that it is worse than useless, and that you are in Delhi, so called because it is the *heart* of a mighty empire, which shall now be ours, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, and from Brahmaputra to the Bay of Cambay, for all Hindostan shall become the heritage of the descendants of Timour."

But still the girl shuddered with annoyance, and with averted eye.

"May I add," he resumed, "what I have never said before—that when I saw you, I felt that a new Queen of Delhi—really a second Nour Mahal—would ascend her throne; one worthy to sleep by my side in life, and to repose with me after death in the tomb of Homaion."

"You forget, my lord," urged poor Polly, for the twentieth time, "that you have at least one wife already."

"No—I am not likely to forget the ill-tempered and childless Azeezun, certainly," said the prince, bitterly.

"And you seem to forget, too, that you are a second son, and that the son of your dead elder brother yet lives."

"But princes die sometimes," replied Abubeker, glancing with his stealthy eyes at a tower near the Summun Boorj (where a foul tragedy had been enacted in his family and during his boyhood), and unconsciously revealing the dark designs he cherished against his nephew and his brother Mogul; "forget your father's house and all his household. What was he but an unbelieving Moulvie, and what were the rest but infidels? That you should regret them is absurd; moreover, what is done, is done! Think

only of the pleasures I can accord you; the silks, the jewels, the splendours, the pageantry, the slaves, the spoil by which I can surround you; and think of the admiration of our people, should you bear a son to Mirza Abubeker!"

"Oh," cried Polly, shuddering more than ever, and covering her wan face with her hands, and the masses of her hair; "this insolence is too much!"

"Still weeping, girl?" exclaimed the prince, who had been eying her amorously; "ah—you long for Calcutta and the iron ships that go there by fire from Allahabad; but, by the shirt of the Prophet, none of those things shall you ever see more! A little time, and from being angered, I shall learn to hate you. Grief, which is unavailing, and despair which is sinful, are dimming the bloom of your youth, the lustre of your beauty, and more than all——"

"Well, my lord?" asked the weak voice.

"They rather disgust me."

It was somewhat in this style that Pershad Sing had threatened Kate.

Polly gave one of her dolorous, half sob-like sighs.

"Do you know that you are beautiful?" he asked, after a ong pause.

"No;" was the blunt reply.

"Did your mirror never show that you were so?"

"No."

"Have those dull infidels been so blind that none have ever said so to you?"

"Yes—many have told me so," replied Polly, almost spitefully; "and I believed them—for I loved them all dearly."

Abubeker's black, beady eyes glittered with rage; but dissembling, he asked softly,—

"And who were those discerning persons?"

"My dear papa, my sweet sisters, my cousin Dicky Rivers, and ever so many more," said Polly, melting into a passion of tears. Then suddenly changing her manner from gentleness and helplessness, she turned upon him with her eyes full of anger and added,—

"Enough of this cruelty, folly, and insult, my lord; speak to me but once again of your odious love, and I may forget that I am a Christian woman, and kill myself—that is, if I can but find the means!"

Polly had been considered and spoken of by her own family as "a good-hearted little soul, with no great share of brains—a child," and so forth; but there were times now when she had all the fierce resolution of a heroine.

In her father's house the poor girl had been a harmless, juvenile flirt, though, like many who were her seniors, she was vain

enough to love all the admiration she could get, whether from Pat Doyle, Horace Eversly, Frank Temple, or any one else; but there was a corner in her heart for one she loved better than any of them, and who, in ways and years, was more akin to herself—her cousin, the saucy boy-ensign, Richard Rivers, of the 6th Bengal Infantry, who had not long before these events been appointed from the school at Addiscombe.

"Poor dear Dicky," Polly had said to herself a thousand times, "what may have become of him, and of little Willie, too? Doubtless he and the poor pet lamb are dead," she would add, and there was a melancholy comfort in the idea that all their sufferings were over.

And now, as regards Dicky Rivers, we may as well close this chapter by simply informing the reader of what Polly was fated never, perhaps, to know.

In the melancholy history of the Indian mutiny few episodes are more striking than the fate of Dicky Rivers.

In the confusion of the flight from Delhi, and the dusk of the night, he became separated from all, and after seeking in vain for a friend or even a European companion, and seeing only flashing musketry and infuriated Indians everywhere, he threw away his epaulettes, and all that might serve to impede his progress, or lead to detection. Crouching like a hare, at times, he crept along the road by the Shah-al-Imar garden, crossed the Jumna by a ford, and proceeded for safety he knew not whither.

After innumerable hair-breadth escapes, sore sufferings, and adventures for weeks, in some instances daring even to beg his way, fording rivers, hiding amid jungle grass in groves and fields of growing grain, and after once having to ascend a tree to avoid a tiger, he reached the Ganges, accompanied by an old Scripture-reader of Dr. Weston's, whom he met near Ahmedgur.

At the holy river, he was favoured by an old native boatman, who took pity on his youth and terrible misery, and to whom he offered a valuable bribe for a conveyance to his regiment, the 6th, which was stationed nearly three hundred miles down the river at Allahabad, where it mutinied in June, and after destroying in the usual fiendish manner, nearly every European, set off to swell the horde of disciplined desperadoes in Delhi.

But Rivers was not fated to reach the station; at that part of the river which passes Cawnpore, they heard the cannonading of Nana Sahib against the unfortunate people who were shut up in the fatal intrenchment there, and the boatman having in his terror abandoned them, Rivers and his companion found themselves impelled to join a band of wretched fugitives, who had just arrived from Futteghur, and who, to the number of a hundred and twenty-six persons, hovered with their children at the passage of the Ganges, in a state of exhaustion and despair.

Turning his cannon on them, the relentless Nana gave them the alternative of being sunk in the stream or yielding to his mercy. Some trusted to flight, and so perished; others accepted his promised protection, and their fate, too, was soon sealed. The women and children were at once despatched by swords and spears; the men he ranged in a line, with their arms secured behind them, and to a long bamboo pole, and after a protracted course of taunts and petty torture, they were slain by the cavalry, who in succession, pistolled every alternate man so that his shattered head might drop, right or left, upon his neighbour, and in this way was prolonged for hours the awful contact of the living with the dead.

Feigning death by the advice of the Scripture-reader (who, like himself, was covered with the blood of their companions), they both contrived to elude the pistolling, to escape from amid the ghastly pile—the cords which bound them to the bamboo pole having become relaxed when so many died—and under the shade of night, they were creeping away, when a few roving Mohammedan troopers discovered them.

These men seized them both, and supposing that now indeed the end was come, the naturally bold and defiant spirit of the the boy led him to mock and scorn those who were to be his destroyers, and who, by the advice of the ubiquitous dervish, Hafiz Falladeen, then on a mission to the Nana, dragged them to the front of the little mosque, in one of the deep ravines which break the monotony of the sandy plain of Cawnpore; and there about sunrise, the dervish, who had discovered in the catechist one whom he deemed an expounder of false doctrine, gave them both the option of becoming Mussulmans or being put to a terrible death.

"Become what?" asked Dicky Rivers, not quite understanding the fierce propoundings of the dervish.

"They wish us to adopt the turban," groaned the missionary, a feeble man, well up in years; "to become Mussulmans!"

"To turn Niggers?" exclaimed Dicky, eyeing, without flinching, the dark faces, the cruel gleaming eyes, and naked swords of the Mohammedan sowars; "I'll see them all in a hotter climate than India, before I do so."

"But consider your life—and—my life," moaned the Scripture-reader, wringing his hands.

"What care I for my life? They have taken the lives of all my friends—of all I have loved in this world. Moreover, I have been so long in the jungle, my good fellow, that civilization is nearly jungled out of me," continued Dicky, "and, by the living jingo, I am now as savage as a Pandy, as squalid and dirty as a Blackheath gipsy."

"Accursed infidels!" exclaimed the dervish, closing a long torrent of disjointed sentences from the Koran; "if you believe

not the voice of the Prophet, then how shall even a miracle convince you?"

"Here, you absurd old fellow," said Dicky, while his face grew pale, and his lips quivered with the rage and grief he strove to conceal under a brave bearing; "cut it short, now; I was pretty well stuffed with your beastly Hindostanee at Addiscombe, and I don't want it here; so enough of this rubbish, which no fellow can understand." Then turning to the troopers, he added, "and now, you nigger scoundrels, Tippoo Sahib, Hyder Ali, Timour the Tartar, or whatever you call yourselves, blaze away, and make an end of it!"

"At your birth, O Infidel," resumed the dervish, speaking solemnly in his native language, while the fires of insanity and fanaticism seemed to mingle in his hollow eyes, "and at thine, O Moulvie, as at the births of all, whether to be reared as true believer or false idolater, Azrael, the angel of Death, was present unseen, to write upon our foreheads the hour in which we shall die; so that it lies not with ourselves to protract existence—yet it may be that your hour is not come, if you renounce your false creed and embrace ours. Transient as sunbeams are the joys of this world; but the joys of the future are everlasting, and are for those—and those only—who fear, love, and believe in the only Prophet of God!"

The etourdi bearing of the young ensign, of the slangy cadet, of the mere saucy English school-boy, changed altogether now, and something grand and sublime came over the spirit of Rivers; he felt that his career was soon to be ended, anyway, and he resolved, as he thought, to die game! He turned his pale young face to the glorious sun of the Indian morning, to the brilliant flowers, to the drooping palms and feathery foliaged tamarind tree, and surveyed the beauties of the opening day that would have no close for him.

In that brief moment, there was a singulur rush of memory in his soul, and he seemed to live all his past life of some seventeen happy years over again; his joyous infancy, his boisterous school-days, his home, the voices and faces of his parents, his boyish dreams and sentiments, his first ambitions, his manlier hopes—all were present with him, and were to be ended now without the regrets of age, or the terrors of a mis-spent life.

"Renounce," cried the dervish, pointing to the mosque, with his long, lean, and talon-like fingers; "renounce!"

Rivers turned to him, and said boldly—

"*Never!*"

Then to the Scripture-reader he added—

"'He who denies me in this world, him will I deny before my Father which is in Heaven;' so did my dear dead mother teach me, and now I must not forget her rearing. Good-bye—a short

farewell to you, my dear sir," continued Dicky, pressing the trembling hands of the Scripture-reader, who—as he afterwards confessed—was on the verge of making some pretended concession, so shaken was his nervous system, so great his terror of death; "I thank you sincerely for all the good advice you have given me in our useless flight—useless indeed, as we had better have perished among those we loved in Delhi. But praise be to Heaven, I stand in need of no encouragement now. I shall continue faithful and steadfast to the end, which is so nigh, and no power or fear on earth shall lure me, even in mockery, to deceive creatures such as these, by denying for a moment, Him who is in heaven!"

Then the old Scripture-reader, inspired by the divine enthusiasm of the boy, wept and said—

"Right, my good youth; you are stronger of heart than I, and you nobly remind me of my duty. Let us believe and trust in Him you have named, and we shall pass in triumph through this awful ordeal."

"Yes! in due season," exclaimed Rivers, with true religious fervour, "we shall reap if we faint not. Now do your worst, benighted wretches!" he shouted in Hindostanee, while his eyes sparkled, and his pale cheek flushed; "I spit upon your false prophet, and defy you!"

But the sentence was barely uttered, when with yells of "Deen, deen!" twenty swords were flashed in the morning sun, all was over, and the spirit of the brave boy—of *the martyr*—was at rest.

The old Scripture-reader was also cut down, and left for dead; but he contrived to achieve an escape in the end, as the troopers departed instantly for Delhi.

CHAPTER LXIX.

POLLY'S NOTE.

OF the little child, Willie, all trace had been lost, though Mirza Abubeker, not in a spirit of humanity, but merely to gratify Polly, had ordered inquiries to be made, as it was alleged that some of the Hindoos had secreted European children, with the intention of offering them, in November, as sacrifices to the Ganges, into which the Jumna flows. Doctor Weston, however, was still surviving, though a confirmed invalid, and confined to a poor charpoy, in that dull, damp, and ill-lighted chamber of the Sallyport Tower, in which he had been placed when first brought to the palace, and where he had been kept alive solely for the purpose that his daughter (or daughters, should the others be caught) might be terrified into compliance with anything as the price of his existence; and there daily and nightly, on his knees, the poor old man, so lonely and bereaved, prayed for the safety of his children, if surviving,—for their future welfare, if dead; for he was one of those who believed that the heartfelt prayers of the living for the departed could not be without avail.

"Alas!" he would say, as he pressed his wrinkled hands upon his hollow and throbbing temples; "I am desolate and forlorn—abandoned! Job seated in his woe among the ashes—the beggar, with his sores and sorrows, at the rich man's gate, were never more miserable than I. Oh, whose grief is like unto mine? My sweet daughters—my tender children—my desolated home! Yet the mercies of God are great, and I must bear my cross, even as One greater than all mankind bore it before me. But my children—my children!" and then it was that the vulture seemed to prey upon his vitals—the iron to enter his soul!

Yet he strove to teach himself resignation; but the attempt was vain, for the strings of his inner heart were torn asunder.

Polly, we have said, had been again and again assured that her father still existed, though a prisoner in the palace, and consequently she had never ceased to implore Abubeker, and others, to permit them to meet; but was invariably told that no man, not even her father, might look upon her face again, till one day, when with her in the kiosk, the prince suggested that she should

send a note, to which the Doctor might reply, as a proof that he was still living.

Tremulous with haste, too gladly did Polly avail herself of this unexpected permission. Her note contained but a few words, to the effect that she was as yet safe, but sick and ailing; that she implored him to write or send some token that he yet lived—even his signature, and to reply by the bearer.

To Baboo Bulli Sing—who was now almost daily engaged in active military duty, and who wore a gorgeous Oriental dress, with a plumed Mahratta cap of steel, having around it a tippet of mail, all the gift of Nana Sahib—the note was entrusted; and from the garden of the zenana he repaired to the great pile of red stone known as the Sallyport Tower, while Polly awaited the reply with an intensity of anxiety that rendered her oblivious of the presence of Abubeker, who, with crooked knees, was seated by her side, and retained one of her hands in his clasp, as the reward of his vast condescension.

The female gholaum to whom Baboo gave the Doctor's answer, presented herself, with forehead bowed on the verge of the carpet, in the kiosk; but ere she could deliver it, Polly, with a wild cry, snatched it from her.

It *was* from her father, and contained his signature, with a line, or little more—

"I still linger here, my beloved child; but feel that I cannot do so long—the powers of life grow feebler every day. Pray for me.

"Delhi, 29th May."

The sight of his familiar writing, though tremulous and somewhat changed, filled her with a species of transport; she sank on her knees, she kissed it, and placed it in her bosom, only to draw it forth to read and kiss it again and again. Then she threw herself before Abubeker, and implored him in the most touching manner to take her to where her parent was confined; to let her hear his voice—to see his face but once again.

"Oh! my papa—my sisters!" she exclaimed; "I never knew till now how much I really love you all! If we meet no more in this world, we shall do so in the next, where there shall neither be parting nor sorrow."

The light that came into her eyes, the flush that pervaded her cheek, the new and imploring expression, with the general animation that filled her features, gave a strange radiance to her beautiful face; the ardour of the flabby Abubeker became kindled anew, and in his anxiety to gratify her, he actually desired Baboo Sing to conduct her to the vault where her father lay.

"Take her to the old unbelieving dog," he whispered, in Hindostanee, "and let them meet, but only to part more surely; for talking of dogs reminds me that the cur of Captain Douglas

still prowls about the palace; and, by the shirt of Mohamed! if this Feringhee girl continues thus obstinate, I shall strike off the heads of her father and the cur, and transpose them before her, as a hint of what may be her own fate. Wah-wah—shabash—go!"

Feeble though she was, Polly had sprung to her feet on the instant when the prince had accorded his permission, and followed Baboo Bulli Sing through the garden, past the stately façade of the dewan khana, to the tower of the Sallyport. Higher rose her pulses, more wildly beat her heart; she was as if in a dream—a dream of strangely mingled ecstacy and sorrow, when she drew near the place, and saw the little arched door, and heard the sound of the lock, as Baboo put the key in it.

Her heart was tremulous with affectionate expectation; there was a wonderful pathos, joy, and yearning, in her voice—all of which the ex-Thug could not understand—as she exclaimed, while pressing her hands upon her breast,—

"Papa—my own papa—I am here! I am here! Oh, what shall I do to save you?—to—to——"

But then her words ended in a shrill cry, that passed into a wail of despair, as she shrank back and clutched the flowing dress of the Baboo (which means esquire) to save herself from falling.

On the miserable charpoy, or native bed, worn almost to a skeleton, wasted by confinement and sorrow, the poor clergyman lay dead, with her little note pressed against his heart, for the sight of her handwriting, and of her name, with his joy on thus hearing of the safety of at least one of his children, had proved too much for his sorely weakened system. Some palsy of the heart had been the result, and he had expired almost the moment her messenger had left him.

The unhappy girl, on witnessing this appalling spectacle, became as it were, almost fatuous. She gazed upon her father as he lay extended in angular rigidity under the coverlet, while a ray of sunlight that poured aslant through the small and grated window, streamed full upon his face, and the breeze that came from the Jumna lifted at times his thin, white silvery hair.

In death the wrinkles were already vanishing from the pale and livid face; his cheek and brow were fast becoming smooth—yea, smoother than her own, and in a little time he would have seemed younger than she could ever remember him.

She touched his withered hand.

Then the strange electric chill of its deadly coldness struck horror to her heart; another terrible cry escaped her; she flung herself wildly on the floor, and from thence some women of the zenana bore her once more to her former apartment—the cuchucoda.

CHAPTER LXX.

IN THE CUCHUC-ODA.

SHE was again prostrated by fever and illness, and committed to the care of dark and ignorant slave women, who thought all her ailings were wisely and abundantly attended to, if written slips of the Koran were tied as charms about her wrists and neck; and more than all, because she had the use of a beautiful little bed, with posts entirely of silver, cut and chased, and having white ivory feet and drapery of yellow Cashmere shawls.

It was like a dream to her—for she had no certainty of anything now, save a bitter repugnance of Abubeker, which bordered on insanity—that she had seen more than once, sitting opposite to this bed, and propped on luxurious cushions, two women, both young and handsome, but of imperious aspect, very dark complexioned, with rings in their right nostrils, rings in their ears, on their thumbs and fingers, coils of snowy pearls and brilliant rubies round their necks, both with flowing veils and rich attire, and both smoking the tiniest of hookahs, while they quietly conversed and curiously surveyed her.

When they disappeared, Polly thought simply that her dream was over, and that they were only a portion of the phantasmagoria that surrounded her now.

But these visitors were the Sultana Zeenat Mahal, and Azeezun, the chief wife of Abubeker, who were consulting as to how they might rid the palace of her quietly during some of the absences of the Prince with the cavalry; and neither the jealous Azeezun, nor the former royal lady, was likely to be very particular as to the intended mode of riddance.

In the adjoining tower, the Summun Boorj, in 1856, died the eldest son of Mohamed Bahadoor Shah, a prince named Ferruk-od-deen, a handsome man in the prime of life—the victim of cholera, said some,—of foul play, said the authorities at Calcutta, for there were dark rumours of a pomegranate from the garden of Shah-al-Imar, pricked all over, impregnated with a deadly poison, and given to him by the hands of Zeenat Mahal, his step-mother, the last matrimonial choice of the dotard, his father, her object being to make way for her own son, on whom he lavished

all his affection, as the child of his old age; and, but for the suspicions then excited, the Mirzas Mogul and Ahubeker might each have been favoured with a pomegranate in turn.

What course Polly's destiny might have had in the hands of those ladies, it may not be difficult to guess; but as both conceived the victim to be dying—so unearthly seemed the whiteness of her skin—they resolved to leave her to her *kismet* or fate, as the vengeance of Mirza Abubeker would not have been pleasant, had he suspected them of any treachery towards her.

To amuse her, he was about to have constructed under her window, a great draught-board of black and white marble slabs, after the fashion of that on which his ancestor the Emperor Akbar played, the figures being sixteen beautiful female slaves who were all carried off by the winner; but the advance of the insolent Feringhees from Umballa, soon cut out other work for him, and all who were in Delhi.

Seated at the open window in the lofty tower of the cuchuc oda, which commanded a view of the flat country far beyond the bastions, the dome of St. James's church, and away to where the ruins of the British cantonments stood, she was seldom weary of gazing northward, in the desperate hope of seeing some succour or sign thereof appear; for hope refused to accept the tale that the Europeans had been completely exterminated.

As for the palace in the immediate foreground of this view, its vastness and grandeur excited only her disgust. "It is an immense structure," says a traveller, "all built of stone, with buttresses and ramparts, and looks like an exaggerated scene of Timour the Tartar, and as if little Agib was to be thrown immediately from the highest tower, and Fatima to be constantly wringing her hands on the top of the battlements."

One day along the line of the old cantonments, where the British have held their camp ever since the old days of Assaye—that field of glory where our Macleod Highlanders won their triple standard and silver war-pipes—she saw the gleam of arms, and red masses of men begin to form in columns along the ridge of rocks, while a terrible hubbub became apparent within the walls of the city, when drums were beaten and gongs, bells, and ghurries clanged.

The sound of bugles, too, came at times upon the wind, for this was the morning of the 8th of June, when our army appeared before Delhi.

A torrent of grateful tears fell from the eyes of the girl, and partially relieved her; the dreamy and delirious thoughts which had so long oppressed her gave place to coherency; she threw herself on her knees and prayed fervently to Heaven for the success of those who were now hovering like a stormy cloud over Delhi, for in every soldier in yonder ranks she welcomed a brother—a deliverer!

"Wah! wah!" said Abubeker, who had drawn near her, unperceived in her joy; "let their drums beat, and their cannons be heard," he added mockingly; "know you not that the huma, the sacred bird which never touches the ground, but floats for ever in the air, has hovered over the aged head of Mohamed of Delhi, and so surely as it has done so, shall he be a victorious king!"

But even as he spoke, the clear notes of the Kentish bugles rang out on the ambient air, and the dark line of the 60th Rifles, extended in skirmishing order, and covered by the gallant Hodson's band of Horse, began to descend the ridge of rocks towards the Cashmere Gate.

CHAPTER LXXI.

* * * * *

DURING the first days of the siege, the two Delhi princes showed themselves reluctantly in various parts of the city, seated in the golden howdah of an elephant, or mounted on Kochlani steeds, whose written genealogy was said to have been preserved for two thousand years, as their descent was deduced from the horses of king Solomon; but the ignorance of military matters displayed by the Mirzas Mogul and Abubeker, excited the derision of the sepoys, who laughed aloud to see them running after fragments of exploded shells, and examining them with vacant and childish wonder.

After the arrival of the Bareilly mutineers, when the defence of Delhi was confided to their leaders, such as Mohamed Bukt Khan and others, the useless princes were gladly relieved from all duty by the old king, their father; Mogul secluded himself in the safest part of his zenana; and Abubeker had plenty of leisure to bestow upon the persecution of Polly Weston.

The powers of life and girlhood were too strong in her, to be crushed, even by all she had endured, or to be destroyed by the keenness of her sorrow; the daily din and clamour of the siege,

and the booming of the breaching batteries, all served to inspire a hope that she might yet be free, so she regained strength and beauty, even plumpness after a time; but these changes only served to make the importunities of Mirza Abubeker more troublesome.

"No houri of paradise can be more beautiful than my little Feringhee girl," said he, as he sat one day in the kiosk, enjoying a hookah with Baboo Bulli Sing, about sunrise.

"Perhaps so, most high," responded the other, who saw that he wished to change the subject from the progress of the siege, a matter which rather bored his royal highness; "her eyes, if I may dare to observe that which hath found favour in your sight, are like the blue lotus of Cashmere, and her wondrous hair is like the beams of the sun."

"How came such a daughter of a cursed Feringhee father?" exclaimed the prince.

"She raises a wish and a sigh in the heart of every man who looks on her."

"Save myself no man shall see or sigh over her; but, by the soul of Solymaun, if she trifles with me much longer, I shall have her blown from the mouth of a mortar!"

As the prince spoke, a large shell, shot from the battery at the Koodsee Bagh, little more than a quarter of a mile from the palace wall, fell into the garden with a shrill whistling sound, and exploded with a tremendous crash, scattering the trees and bushes in every direction.

Abubeker turned almost skyblue.

"So close already!" said he.

"Yes, most high," replied the other, who was a man of undoubted courage, "and, with your permission, I shall rejoin my men at the Moora Bastion to which this new battery is immediately opposed."

Baboo Bulli started to his feet, adjusted his sabre and pistols, and making a low salaam to conceal the scorn of the prince's timidity and indolence that glittered in his eyes, he hurried away. Abubeker listened to the thunder of the cannonade, and the sound offended his royal ears; he then looked at the fragments of the shell, and seemed to think he had been quite long enough there, so he quitted the kiosk, and went straight to the apartment of his victim.

His soft slippers permitted him to come quite near, unknown to her; there was no door to open, but simply a silken curtain to draw aside, so he came close to Polly, who had half risen and was half reclining in the silver bed, and with her head propped on her hand, was watching the smoke wreaths of the cannon, as they curled snow-white in the sunshine above the ruins of the arsenal, those of the college, and the dome of St. James's Church. Close

sounded the cannon now, for those at the Koodsee Garden, were a mile and a half nearer Delhi, than the first batteries!

Her bright soft hair fell in a silky volume down her back, and the thin transparent muslin of her night-dress, permitted the pure whiteness of her skin to be visible through it. Suddenly she became aware of the presence of Abubeker, and shrunk down on her pillow, closing her eyes with intense disgust, as she muttered—

"Oh, that man—always that man—that torment!"

A visit such as this, though a shocking violation of all propriety in European society, was of course a very ordinary affair in the zenana at Delhi.

Endeavouring to blend with a smile the dangerous gleam that came into his face, he said—

"Heed not the sound of the cannon; the deluded infidels without there are few in number, and shall soon be destroyed. The smoke of the powder is unpleasant, so look into the parterres below your window. I do not think that the Garden of the Eternal Abode—may the Prophet forgive me—can be more beautiful than ours; yet to please you, my beloved girl, I would ransack Jinnistaun, the Country of Delight, and rob the City of Jewels, to lay their treasures at your feet!"

"Restore my father to life!" said Polly, calmly and sternly, for this bombast disgusted her.

"You ask of me that which is impossible."

"Restore me to my people yonder."

"That too is impossible," replied the Prince, pressing his fat fingers together, and half closing his almond-shaped eyes.

As usual, he endeavoured to take one of her hands in his, but Polly resisted this, and had a new expression in her face to-day—the light of hope and desire for retribution shone in her blue eyes and flushed her cheek. She could hear that the firing was closer now, and she had seen the shell explode in the garden of the palace, from whence a thousand beautiful birds had fled to the roofs and towers.

Her bearing was proud and defiant, yet the poor girl was feeble, and though recovering, unable to quit her bed; but she turned from him impatiently and wearily. Abubeker had never before been treated thus; passionate and resentful, he was a man whom the mere fact of defeat or opposition was sufficient to pique and exasperate, be the object in view however great or small.

"Speak to me," said he, placing his brown but effeminate hands on her shoulders, and turning her forcibly round.

Pride, anger, and opposition in Polly were fast taking the place of suffering, of heartache, and utter despair. Her father was beyond the reach of mortal torment or protection now; and when

another shell fell with a crash on the roof of the Dewan Khana, and exploded with a thundering sound in the marble court below, the girl laughed—for the first time since that marriage morning—and actually laughed merrily.

"You have heard me?" resumed Abubeker, in whose heart rage began to rise. "I tell you that if every leaf in yonder trees was each a tongue, they could not tell how much I love. Feringhee girl, you hear me?"

"Yes, my lord."

"You remember all I have said so often?"

"I remember too much, at all events," replied Polly, still watching the smoke wreaths at the Koodsee Bagh.

"And the answer is to be the same—that you will not love me in return."

"I tremble, my lord, to say again the words I have said so often, lest I rouse your anger; and I am, as you see, but a helpless girl. I do not, and never can, love you."

"But that does not prevent me loving you," he urged.

"Ah, my lord!" cried poor Polly, shuddering and closing her eyes, for she read in those of Abubeker a more dangerous and gloomy expression than she had ever seen before; "ask me anything but this."

"Fool, and daughter of a fool! What could the son of Mohamed Bahadoor Shah require at the hands of a Feringhee girl?"

"If my life will please you, take it, and let me die in peace."

"Yield to me," he continued, while his grasp tightened on her slender waist, and his breath, heavy with the perfumed or drugged tobacco of his hookah, came odiously and oppressively close to her, despite her resistance and shrinking; "let your will stoop to mine, or beware the fate by which so many have perished. Think of it, girl, for it is terrible."

"You talk to me thus, and yet dare to say you love me?" said Polly, scorn mingling with her terror.

"Dare!" exclaimed Abubeker, almost scared by her temerity.

"Yes, wretch, dare!" continued Polly, in a voice rendered tremulous by the rage that mingled with her other emotions.

The face of Abubeker was very close to her, for he had been attempting to obtain a kiss, and he had already placed an arm forcibly round her, when a sudden frenzy seemed to fire her spirit.

With her quick little hands she struck the splendid turban from his head and dashed it away, scattering the brilliants which sparkled amid its folds. She then seized him by the beard, and rent and tore it from him in handfuls, as she twisted his hateful face away from its vicinity to her own.

The pain this gave him was exquisite—the sense of insult be-

wildering. The copper, almost golden-coloured, face of Abubeker became a species of ghastly or slaty grey, his eyes were absolutely blazing, and his nostrils were working and quivering with rage. He shrank breathlessly back, and furiously eyed the girl, who lay on her pillow pale and panting, with the handfuls of his sacred and cherished beard clutched in her fingers, from which she cast them with intense disgust.

"Most accursed Feringhee!" said he, in a low and hoarse voice, "be assured I shall have a terrible revenge for this act of desecration!"

At that moment a step and voice were heard without. They were those of Baboo Sing, who was calling for the prince in excited tones. The soubadar had come back from the Moora Bastion as fast as his carriage could carry him; for he had appropriated the entire "turn out" of Colonel Patna Rhys, just as other natives had seized upon the horses and vehicles of the slain Feringhees.

"Oh, protector! oh, supporter of the world!" he was crying; "where is the King? where is the Shah Zadah Mogul? All is lost—the kafirs triumph!"

"Solymaun ibn Daood!" said the prince, furiously, "it would seem so when you dare to penetrate even here. Why are you so terrified?"

"I am *not* terrified," replied Baboo, who was a man without fear or scruple; but he was rather surprised by the disordered appearance of the Mirza, who said,—

"Then speak, in the name of the most merciful!"

"Oh, most high! this is no time for loitering in the zenana; the stormers are already before the Cashmere Gate, and in another hour may be within the heart of Delhi; our men are yielding in every quarter. The Lahore Gate is on the point of being abandoned; you and the Mirza Mogul *must* show yourselves, or all may be lost!"

"So be it," said Abubeker, who had never before been thus addressed, as he turned to the pale, feeble, and now half-fainting girl; "shabash! at last,—at last, infamous Feringhee, I shall teach you the penalty of thus trifling with your master—the holder of your life! Hark, Baboo," he continued, speaking thickly, so much was he now overcome by rage and the hate which inspired him; "get a twelve-pound gun from Mohamed Bukt Khan, the aga of the artillery; tie her hand and foot to the trail of it; let her be dragged by gholandazees to the Kotwally, and there to the budmashes of the city and the Kudalas of the gutters let her be abandoned, since she will not be mine! On peril of your head, let this be done!"

And with a fierce malediction he retired.

Though the hapless girl did not understand one word of all this

terrible sentence, a piercing shriek escaped her when she was torn from her bed; her muslin night-dress rent from her by coarse, remorseless hands; and she was then dragged down the white marble stair of the cuchuc-oda.

CHAPTER LXXII.

BLOWN FROM THE GUNS.

ON the morning of the day after Colonel Rudkin's fall, while yet the Indian sun was lingering at the flat horizon, the whole of the troops that could be spared from the investment were drawn up under arms to witness a terrible scene, but one of those which were almost of daily occurrence now before Delhi, and, indeed, throughout Bengal—the execution of captured mutineers and their abettors.

Hot and crimson, the huge round sun, half shorn of his beams amid the haze of the rainy season, shed his splendour along the plain; the city of Delhi, with dome and tower, mosque and minar, stood in dark outline, all of an indigo tint, against the light, which cast their shadows far across the wilderness of tombs, graves, and gardens, even to the base of the rocks on which the cantonments stood. Away in distance the Jumna flowed between its green banks like a flood of ruby wine, whose shadows deepened to muddy chocolate.

The level glare of the sun shone full upon the open plateau named the British Camp Parade, near the once fashionable Race Course, where portions of the three brigades formed three sides of a square—the fourth, towards the Ochterlony Garden, being open; and there stood ten field-pieces, all twelve-pounders, with the European gunners ranked by the wheels, and a great body of Indian prisoners, all partially clad in sepoy uniforms or native dresses—a dark, sullen, and resentful band—assembled to look their last upon the rising sun.

The Punjab Infantry, the smart little Ghoorka battalions, and one of Sikhs in flowing white dresses, the Queen's 75th, and the

Bengal Fusiliers were ordered to fix their bayonets, and the lines of steel flashed in the sun, as the brigades "shouldered arms;" the ranks were opened, and the officers took post in front of their companies.

On the left of the well-guarded prisoners was the military burial-ground, a habitation that had received many tenants of late; on their right lay the little place named Rajpoora; and in their rear lay the canal from the Nujjufghur Ghil, or Morass, and the far extent of open country, towards which they turned their haggard eyes, in the hopelessness of escape, guarded as they were by the Queen's Carbineers and 9th Lancers.

A stern and determined expression could be read in the faces of their captors, but more particularly in the ranks of the justly exasperated British soldiers, who were there that day to avenge such atrocities against the laws of civilization, religion, and common humanity, as had not been committed since the time of Nadir Shah.

Many a loved face was remembered now, and many a little voice that was hushed for ever, and under their red jackets, the hearts of husbands and fathers were turned as if to flinty stone!

To Jack Harrower, who, on this morning, was acting as Brigade-major to the Meerut force, was assigned the duty of calling aloud the names of the prisoners with the sentences of the General Drum-head Court-martial which had tried them; and the whole affair was very briefly done, after the entire body of culprits, some sixty in number had been marched slowly round the great hollow square, guarded by their cavalry escort and once again were halted in rear of those ten terrible field-pieces, which the Royal Artillerymen were loading—ramming the charges home—with a coolness quite professional.

"Forward with the first batch of wretches!" said Harrower, letting his reins drop on the holsters as he unfolded an official paper; "how many are in this squad, Provost Marshal?"

"Ten, sir."

"Kurrem Shere Khan, jemidar of the 2nd Oude Military Police;" Harrower read in Hindostanee; "Hera Sing, soubadar of the 15th Native Infantry; Munroop Pandy, a peon; Hafiz Falladeen, a dancing dervish; Murdan Sing, sowar of the 6th Cavalry; Assim Alee, footman to Doctor Weston; Ferukh Pandy, footman to Captain Harrower of the Queen's 32nd; Shookier Alee, gholandazee of artillery; Harroun and Selim Azoreppa, brothers, and both sowars of the 3rd Cavalry; all declared guilty of aiding or abetting in the murder of many Europeans, but more especially of certain women, girls, and children, officers and soldiers, all British subjects, with outrage and robbery, all of which are heinous offences under the provisions of the Act 16, of

1857, passed by the Legislative Council of India, and involve the penalty of death.

"Sentence: to be tied each to a gun and blown to pieces."

Though this was the punishment those dastards were all expecting (being the same to which they had subjected Sir Mountstuart Jackson and many others) yet the words of the sentence caused a thrill of horror to pervade them, and their copper-coloured visages assumed a pea-green tint, for this is the only form of death that has any terrors for the Hindostanee. If shot, or slain by the sword, he knows that his friends will be permitted to claim and inhume his remains, according to the rites of his religion; if a Mohammedan, that he will be decently interred with his toes tied together, his turban spread over his face and his eyes turned towards Mecca; if a Hindoo, that his body will be solemnly burned amid such spices and ceremonies as his relatives can provide; but when blown to atoms, as it was certain to be, the task of collecting them would be beyond the ardour of the most affectionate kinsman; and the horror and loathing of being interred with *other* men's legs, arms or fragments, made to each culprit the agony of anticipated death, insupportable!

Creed and caste all went for naught now, and they believed themselves to be—like those whom Neill compelled under the lash to stoop amid the blood in the fatal room at Cawnpore—lost in this world and damned in that to come.

Yet, steeped to the lips as they were in wanton atrocity, no man pitied their misery, and the artillerymen actually smiled with grim and stern satisfaction, as they bound by ropes, the first ten culprits, with their backs placed fairly against the black, round muzzles of the 12-pounders, and their arms drawn backward to the wheels, so that to stir was impossible; but during this process they were all praying, expostulating or speaking together.

"Oh, Brahma!" howled Ferukh Pandy, who was still grotesquely attired in the rags of Harrower's old uniform; "I have drunk wine and eaten of a sacred cow—I have cleaned boots and worn leather! I have lost caste, and committed many sins, and would now—were I out of the hands of those accursed English dogs—roll on my sides a thousand miles to the Ganges and the Indus, as a pilgrim, to wash, in their holy waters, all my sins away!"

The dervish, Hafiz Falladeen, was loudly repeating the profession of his faith, and then turning fiercely to the major of artillery, who was superintending the cording, he said—

"God forgiveth every one, at least once, even the lowest kindala whom the idolater Menou made the outcast of mankind.

Wah—wah! Art thou, O, sahib, greater then, than God, not to forgive at all?"

Assim Alee, the poor doctor's kitmutgar, had been robbed by his fellow prisoners of all his Budmash finery, and now the tall, lean, and brawny ruffian, with long raven hair floating on the wind, and visage fierce but unmoved, stood against the brass gun, clad only in a dhotee or rag round his waist. He neither spoke nor prayed now, but bit his nether lip till the blood trickled from it.

"Oh, sahibs," cried Ferukh Pandy and other Hindoos, in imploring accents, "don't put us into the earth, but cast us into the water, if you choose."

Not one of them repented of the actual crimes for which they were to suffer, though all knew that they had forgotten their "covenant of salt," for, as with all sacrifices salt was offered up, a covenant of it means a solemn treaty between man and man, and between men and their Maker, according to the Orientals.

"All is ready!" said the artillery officer, lowering his sword as he addressed the general.

"Then, Provost-marshal, do your duty," was the reply.

The gunners fell back to their places by the sides of the guns, and ten lighted port-fires were burned with a green and steady glare; but remorse on the one hand or pity on the other was there none. Even Pat Doyle's jovial heart was sealed up.

"There they are, the murdering heathens," he muttered, "quoting Brahma and Vishnu, the Koran, the Shasters, and the writings of Rabbi Ragabash; but, if it was not to punish them in this world, and as they think, in that to come, I'd save the powdther, Jack, and keep to that ould institution which seems a standing one here—the gibbet."

"Fire!" cried the Provost-marshal.

The ten port-fires fell on the touch-holes; the ten field-pieces exploded together with the crash of a salvo.

A cloud of white smoke to the front—white, but streaked with a strange dark redness—a descending shower—but a shower of what? for all men stoop and shudder under it!

It was a falling rain of human fragments—of arms, legs, heads, and portions of the mortal frames, the veritable rags and fritters of Hindoos and Mohammedans, all mingled together; and paler now, if possible, grew the faces of those who were to suffer, for the scene was indescribably a horrid one.

With brooms and baskets, the low caste camp-followers swept and took away the remains, and once more with the callousness the deeds of those wretches had wrought in their hearts, our men reloaded their guns.

"Forward with the next squad of ten!" cried Harrower, and

so the work of death went on, till nothing but a mass of fragments in a hole newly dug near the Race-course, remained of the prisoners, nearly every one of whom, as Harrower said, "died game to the backbone, and with a pluck calculated to excite, if not pity, at least admiration."

CHAPTER LXXIII.

NEMESIS.

ON an evening in the last days of August, a loud and continued cheering was heard along the British lines, and Harrower, on sending from the rough bungalow which had been hastily constructed for him on the ruins of his old one, to inquire the reason of the rejoicing, was informed that there had arrived in camp a European lady, who had just effected her escape from Delhi, where she had been concealed since the mutiny, in one of the Ty-kunas or under-ground houses; and this circumstance gave the greatest animation to the troops.*

"We must have a weed and some wine on the head of this," said Harrower to Doyle and a few others, who, when not on duty, usually made his wigwam (as they named it) their rendezvous; "it makes me more hopeful of saving poor Polly Weston and the doctor."

"Yes," added Eversly, fanning his face with his solar-topee (having reddened at the mention of Polly, for whom he always had a weakness) "once into Delhi, we must make a dash for the

* This lady was the wife of a civilian. Two chuprassies protected and got her out of the city. She was clad only in two pieces of cloth, one round her head, and the other round her body, and was in a deplorable condition when she reached Captain Bailey's piquet, where she threw herself on her knees, among the soldiers, to thank Heaven for her deliverance. On reaching the camp, the general ordered a staff tent to be placed at her disposal with every comfort that the place and time could afford.

palace—blow in the gates by a field-piece, and scour the entire edifice."

"Whoever leads the stormers, I'll go with him, lame leg and all," said Doyle. "This bullet in the calf will mar my round dancing for many a day—or night I should rather say—but I hope to see little Miss Weston in all her bloom and glory yet, God bless her!"

All in camp were most anxious to bring matters to an issue in the city of Delhi, as the startling tidings had come, that a rebel named Khan Bahadoor Khan, an old native judge, long noted for his servility to the Company, had proclaimed himself King of Rohilcund, and, after inaugurating his accession by a fearful tragedy, was threatening to march upon the lonely mountain refuge at Ninee Tal, and to put to death every man, woman, and child, who found shelter there.

In camp there were no punkahs, of course, so the heat was terrible, and, as usual in India, every one made the stale joke of there being only a sheet of paper between Delhi and the *other* place.

"Well, well," said Doyle, some evenings after, as he lingered over a glass of pale sherry, from a bottle cooled in a tank; "when this disgusting work is over, we shall again enjoy the true comforts of an Indian life, the punkah overhead, the drenched tatty between us and the hot wind, the muslin curtains, ice thick with apples from America, salmon from Scotland, bitter beer from the Thames, sardines from the Mediterranean, and what more could man desire, barring, may be, potatoes from old Irelaud?"

"At what hour do we fall in?" asked Tracy, of the Fusiliers, a plump, jolly Englishman, whom neither toil nor huuger had impaired as yet.

"Fall in—for what purpose?" asked Harrower.

"To attack the Cashmere Gate, of course."

"By Jove! I had forgotten; we have been making so many attacks of late, that one gets quite used to the thing."

"To-morrow morning, before daybreak, say the orders; and we advance in four columns of attack, with a reserve," said Frank Temple, of the 32nd, a habitually grave and rather reserved young fellow; "the Brigadier in person leads the Forlorn Hope."

"There, now; Frank is as good as a walking order-book. Thanks, my boy, and pass the bottle—the brandy, I mean, this time," said Doyle. "I never drink anything stronger than brandy (barring, maybe, a little sup of whisky), or anything weaker than water. One quarter of water to three quarters of brandy, make the perfection of grog; a drop more of either—un-

less it be of brandy—spoils the mixture; and when taken, to be well shaken; there is a prescription for you, Bob Tracy."

"What news is in camp this evening?" asked the latter.

"Chiefly the preparations for the great event of to-morrow——"

"Two cases of sunstroke in the right attack," said Eversly; "a bungalow washed down by the rains, a Ghoorkha killed thereby; another strangled no one knows how, unless by some ex-Thug; and there has been a row among the Sikhs, because the 61st cut up a sacred cow close by their cantonments."

"Some Punjabees drunk with bhang, and Britons ditto with brandy, make up the casualties of the evening," added Harrower, who was stretched at length on a piece of thick matting, with his linen puggeree very much over one ear, for coolness, a cigar between his teeth, and his head resting on one hand; "but all sentinels have orders to keep a sharp look-out to-night, as the footprints of a tiger have been seen near the Pyrghib Mosque, among those shrubberies where the fire-flies are always thickest after dusk."

"And you really go to the front with us, Doyle, to-morrow?" asked young Temple, after a pause.

"I do, wound and all, though I'd rather leave it behind me," replied the cheerful Irishman, his keen eyes lighting up as he spoke. "Leigh Hunt wrote a mighty pleasant paper on the pleasures of being—not ill, but convalescent. Bedad! I wish he was here before Delhi, with a half-healed bullet wound in his leg, and the thermometer at boiling heat. But I shall not be the last man inside the Cashmere Gate to-morrow, anyhow, boys; and then, by the trout of Kilgavower! we'll cure the Messrs. Mogul and Abubeker of their gallivanting propensities, or perish in the attempt, as the novels say—so here's a glass all round to our next merry meeting!"

"To our next merry meeting, when the bugle sounds!" muttered all, as they drained their glasses.

The breaching batteries had been served so well during a terrible canonade of three days, that by the 14th of September three wide gaps in the Cashmere and Water Bastions were declared to be practicable, and in four great columns of attack the troops descended from the rocky ridge of the cantonments, in the gloomy dusk, while the sun was yet unrisen, and when a kind of haze enveloped the city and its surrounding plain.

Royal and Punjaub Infantry, Bengal Europeans, Sikhs, Sirmoor and Kumaon Ghoorkhas, were all eager for the attack, their blood being heated by the long resistance and its consequent slaughter.

Harrower, Temple, and their little party, were with the 60th Rifles, whose orders were to assist the first column, which, under Brigadier Nicholson, was to storm the Cashmere Gate, while

others [forced] the breaches. This body consisted of the 75th Stirlingshire Regiment, Mellon's corps, the 1st Bengal Fusiliers, and the 2nd Punjabees.

The Cavalry, under General Grant, guarded the lines, the sick, and the rear.

"Stormers of the 1st Brigade fall in on the right of the 75th Foot, and cast loose your cartridges!" rang clearly in the still air, when the troops got under arms.

At three in the morning the first column moved deliberately, amid silence and darkness, out of the cantonments, where few had been able to snatch even an hour of sleep, and all were in the lightest marching order, having thrown away everything that might impede activity in the attack.

Down the slope they came, with the Light Infantry in front, passing Metcalfe House on the left, the Assembly rooms on the right, and over the open ground between. Little was said by officers or men, and after a time almost perfect silence was maintained in the ranks as they advanced; but, could it have been seen amid the darkness, there was a stern—a terribly resolute and grim—expression in every eye and on every face. The lips of all were compressed; and it might have been seen how deeply into every heart had sunk the inhuman and sacrilegious slaughter of the helpless, and that, in this hour of strife, no mercy would be shown to the merciless!

Yet joking, as if at a hunting party, Doyle was heard to laugh more than once in the dark, as the line went stumbling on. Harrower, ere he left him, to press in front with the skirmishers, saw that he was pale and feeble.

"By Jove! Pat," said he, "you should be in the doctors's hands, and not here."

"Where else could I be at such a time, but with my men? and sure, ain't I taking the doctor's prescriptions regularly?"

"Whose?"

"Tim Riley, of ours, that's dead and gone—God rest him!"

"And what is it?"

"Devil a one o' me knows. 'Pilulæ, sac, sal, sass—three snakes' tails, two trombones, and a double bass," as O'Callaghan has it, in the farce we played at Bareilly last year."

"Hush!—good-bye, Pat—there go the enemy's guns at last!"

At that moment, and just as a pale opal light stole suddenly over the whole eastern quarter of the sky—a light against which the masses of the beleaguered city stood forth in black outline—six twenty-four pound guns flashed redly from the Moora Bastion. The six shot swept through the ranks of the Bengal Fusiliers, and one of those who fell—literally cut in two—was poor Pat Doyle!

The attacking column was then just emerging from the Koodsee Bagh, and the shouts went up to Heaven.

"Remember the women and children—no quarter!" cried the 60th Rifles.

"No quarter—Cawnpore! Cawnpore!" cried the 75th men, while their pipes struck up, and with a sound more like a yell of rage than a gennine British cheer, they made a dash at the Cashmere Gate, led by the Brigadier in person.

Close by his side were Lieutenants Home and Salkeld of the Engineers, bearing petards to blow the gate open. The mntineers were all at their posts, and the whole walls of Delhi seemed as one line of bright and rolling fire in the dnsk of the morning, so the assailants suffered terribly. Eversly fell severely wounded at the edge of the counterscarp, and was conveyed to a place of safety by Mcllon.

Harrower had his horse shot under him, and then on foot, with a few of his men (poor Phil Ryder had been knocked over long before) covered the sappers, who were rushing onward to the gate.

The brave Brigadier was killed as the colnmn poured tumultuonsly along a narrow lane through whieh the troops had to advance, and which was swept by round shot, grape, and mnsketry, even "as a tnnnel is swept by a fierce wind or penetrating torrent;" yet others took the lead, and the gallant young Engineer officers with their sappers pressed on towards the Cashmere Gate, which was a barrier of vast size and strength, carrying their petards and powder bags, and stnmbling every moment over the fast-accumnlating debris, the falling, the wonnded, and the dead. The dense air was filled with the odour of gunpowder; at times a cannon shot struck the ground or walls with a crash; but when it pierced the dense ranks of the stormers, how different—how terrible was the muffled sound!

The morning light was fairly radiant now, and chosen marksmen were levelling their rifles in hundreds on the assailants. Many fell, but Lieutenant Home got close to the gate, literally scrambling over pilcs of bodies, and laid the bags against the barrier. At the moment he was about to fire the slow match two bullets piercod him; he fell with a shrill cry of agony, and was dragged away in Harrower's powerful grasp.

Then a resolute corporal, named Bnrgess, though lying near the gate mortally wounded, applied the smouldering match, and he perished, a noble martyr, in the dreadfnl explosion which blew planks and archway, cannon and tower, defenders and everything into the air, amid a roaring whirlwind of shapeless rnin and blinding dust.

The third column, which had now come up, under Colonel Campbell, burst through the gap, and under a dreadful fire from housetops, windows, and balconies, poured along into Chandney

Choke, maddened by the awful spectacle of several Christian women stripped nude, and crucified by the hands and feet—crucified in terrible mockery of the Saviour—against the stone walls inside the gate!

The livid glow of the musketry and of the blazing houses, set aflame by shells and rockets, made the place seem a Pandæmonium on earth; dense smoke and dust loaded the hot Indian air. Oaths, cries of agony in many languages, groans, the crash of walls descending in masses under cannon shot, the horrid sound of men grasping each other in mortal struggles, grappling, twining, and rolling over in turn, close clasped like ravening wolves, till a weapon shortened in the hand gave the secret or the random stab, while on every side were to be seen bayonets twisted and broken, showing how freely they had been used in pinning the fallen to the earth, or the falling against the walls and gates; and, as if in mockery of those terrors, there yet fluttered on these places the bills of a Garrison Amateur Performance, in which the part of "Rob Roy" was to be taken by a Scottish officer, who was now lying in his grave by the Flagstaff Tower; "Die Vernon" by Horace Eversly, of the 54th; to be followed by the laughable farce of "His Last Legs;" Felix O'Callaghan by Mr. Doyle, of the Bengal Fusiliers—all for the benefit of a Hindoo school! Scene painter and stage manager, Captain J. T. Harrower, of the 32nd Regiment.

Amid the rattle of the musketry above and below, and the roar of the cannon, as those on the bastions were now turned, in many instances, inward, and fired into the crowded streets or on each other, were heard the hoarse cheers of the avenging British, the yells of the Sikhs, the Belooches, and Ghoorkhas, all fighting in the mere lust of blood, and the shrill war-cry of the Mohammedans, "Deen! Deen!" which seemed to pierce the air.

In one place three thousand Sepoy Infantry, each man with the trident of Vishnu marked on his forehead, made a resolute stand, but the Rifles and 75th went into them with the bayonet, charging through them again and again, till cries of terror replaced those of—

"Victory to Holy Mother Gunga! Glory to the beard of Mahadera!"

Gathering a company of the 60th, with the remnant of his own men, Harrower sought to draw them off from the awful scene in Chandney Choke, where every male native whom the soldiers met was being shot down or bayoneted without question or delay.

He strove to press on towards the palace, the glorious façade of which he could see towering high above the clouds of smoke that filled the city; but a body of Native Infantry and Cavalry, all mingled pell mell, fought hard to oppose all progress in that

direction, amid shattered ruins, blazing houses, mangled corpses, dead and dying horses, camels, and even elephants, which obstructed every foot of the way.

"Shout, oh, army of the Faithful, for Allah will yet destroy the Kaffir dogs!" cried a brilliant horseman, who brandished a jewelled tulwar, and in whom Harrower recognised the Zemindar of Oude, Nouraddeen Abraha al Ashram. "Come on, my faithful Ghazees!" (true believers) he added, making incredible efforts to inspire a charge; but a 60th Rifleman cut short his career by a bullet through the head.

Then Harrower led on his men, shoulder to shoulder, with the levelled bayonet against the mass, which instantly melted away before them. One fellow, who had made himself particularly active, as he was escaping, Temple caught by his mustachios, which were of such preposterous length as to be tied over his shoulders in a knot behind him. This was "Colouel" Pershad Sing, whose promotion was finally stopped now by more bayonets than one.

The masses around the palace proved too strong to be forced; it was garrisoned, moreover, by a horde of Mohammedan fanatics, who, under Baboo Bulli Sing, fought within its walls till the last man fell, so with a sick, a weary, and a furious heart, Harrower fell back with his shattered party.

When night fell the British were in possession of only a portion of the vast city, a task which cost them eleven hundred and forty-seven killed and wounded, and in the punishment of that barbaric horde who so valiautly opposed them no Pagau worshippers of Nemesis ever proceeded more sternly in their work than did this Christian Army of Retribution, while their allies, accustomed to Asiatic uotions of warfare, revelled in the most unbridled license, for no hand, save that of death, could restrain them.

So frightful was the heat that six hundred cavalry horses fell dead during the day.

Four other nights and days the strife went on, and it was not until the 19th that the city was swept of its defenders, the palace gates blown in by cannon, and it was found to be deserted by the royal family. Then, with all its wondrous and unrivalled splendours and treasures, it was given up to be pillaged by the troops. Jewels, silks, velvets, shawls, embroidered saddles for horses and elephants, cloths of gold, carpets sewn with pearls, diamond hilted weapons, epaulettes, fish, dragons and horses, idols, and ingots all of gold or silver, sacks of mohurs, rupees and precious stones, the peacock throne, and everything went to wreck and ruin; Britons, Sikhs, and Ghoorkhas in kiosks, corridors, court and zenana, with doolywallahs and camp followers of every kind, made all their own.

Loud and long blew the triumphant hugles of the gallant 60th, while in the magnificent Dewan Khana, the general and the leading officers of his staff drained a bumper to the health of "Her Majesty the Queen."

CHAPTER LXXIV.

HODSON'S HORSE.

NOT a trace could be found in the palace of the old king, of his latest Sultana Zeenat Mahal, of the two princes, of Jumma Bukt, the grandson, or of Azeezun, all of whom had been so deeply implicated in the atrocities we have narrated; nor of Polly Weston or her father, though the most minute search was made for them; but Baboo Bulli Sing, who, of all the defenders, had alone survived, was detected in the act of making his escape by Sally-port. Though well mounted, he was closely pursued by Major Hodson and his famous troop of Fifty Horse, accompanied by Jack Harrower, who knew that this distinguished Baboo, of all men about the court, would be best able to inform them of where the royal family were in hiding, and there he doubted not that Doctor Weston, or most certainly his daughter, would be found.

As they set forth, Major Hodson rapidly informed Harrower that he had just come in from the capture of the aged king, of his sultana, Zeenat Mahal, and the Begum Azeezun, all of whom he had taken at the palace of Kootab, about nine miles from Delhi; that he had, somewhat to the indignation of the staff, granted Mohammed Bahadoor Shah his life, in mercy for his extreme old age and hoary locks, but that at Kootab no trace could be found either of the princes or of the two prisoners who were supposed to be surviving in their hands.

Past the long scene of destruction, which marked where the European bungalows had been burned in Durygunge, past the Wellesley bastion, and the old Cabul Gate, past the jail, and away among the ruins of Ferozebad or ancient Delhi, rode the

horsemen in pursuit of the fugitive, through a solitary place of awful desolation, for the district is covered with tombs after tombs of red or white marble, of freestone or granite, with scarcely a tree, and only a species of wild jungle growing between these relics of generation upon generation that have gone down to darkness and to dust unrecorded and unremembered.

In the sunshine the bright Mahratta helmet of Baboo Bulli Sing glittered gaily, but his fresher horse enabled him to distance the pursuers, who lost sight of him for a time; then an exclamation of disappointment escaped them all, when his horse was perceived, galloping past them at an angle, riderless and with empty saddle.

"He must have concealed himself in one of these tombs!" cried Harrower.

"Extend your files, men—scatter and search!" said Major Hodson; "but take him, if you can, alive."

Riding on almost alone, as the horsemen separated and dashed off in different directions, Harrower saw the picturesque figure of the Baboo ascending the ruins of the old observatory, which was built by Mohammed Shah, in 1710, a singular object, which, though styled "the prince of dials," is somewhat difficult of description, as it consists of many towers and detached buildings, with an immense semicircular and equatorial dial, in the centre of which rises a gnomon of stone, nearly one hundred and twenty feet high, having an open staircase that ascends to its summit at an angle of forty-five degrees.

Up this stair, believing himself quite safe, Baboo Bulli Sing was leisurely ascending, when his bright Mahratta cap—the gift of the Nana of Cawnpore—caught the eye of Harrower as it glittered in the sun. Throwing the reins of his horse to a trooper, Jack, with his sword and pistols, entered the open archway of the ruins, and ascended in pursuit.

He felt the deepest excitement now, though after the horrors and carnage of the past months, and more especially of the last few days, one might have expected every emotion to be stilled or blasé in his heart; but he was certain that the Baboo must know whither the royal culprits had fled, and might also give some tidings of where those who were so dear to Lena and Kate, to Mellon and himself were concealed.

His chief dread was that the Baboo would die rather than surrender or speak, and a guttural malediction escaped that personage, on finding that he was pursued so closely up a place from whence there could be no escape but by fighting his way down, or leaping over the wall, which would be only to court certain death among the masses of fallen masonry below; and there, now, Hodson's dashing troopers, who saw both the fugitive and his pursuer, were gathering fast with shrill cries and brandished sabres.

Blind with impotent fury, and cursing in his heart the folly or mischance that led him to choose a place of shelter so conspicuous and absurd, and from whence there was no retreat or outlet, Bulli Sing, whose progress was greatly impeded by the long and flowing skirts of his gorgeously embroidered yellow dress, paused when half-way up, and drawing his long Turkish pistols from his girdle, fired both in quick succession. The bullet of the first whistled away into space, but that of the second passed through the linen flap of Harrower's puggeree and grazed his right ear.

"Half an inch nearer, and you had made a step in the corps, my fine fellow," thought Harrower.

The soubadar had no time for reloading, so he flung his pistols viciously at the head of his antagonist, who avoided them both. Then turning, he resumed his flight, as if courting his kismet, to the very summit of the observatory, where the long and narrow stair ended at a parapet that overhung the profundity below.

There he took breath to prepare for the final struggle, drew his sharp tulwar, and grimly awaited the ascent of Harrower, who could have shot him down now, but that he wished to take him alive, or at least to question him first.

As he drew nearer, step by step, there was a fierce and resolute expression gathering in the dark and formidable face of the Mohammedan, who was resolved to sell his life dearly, and who, believing implicitly in his destiny, felt assured that as he could not protract, neither could Harrower anticipate the appointed time of death, written by Azrael on his forehead.

"Soubadar," said Harrower, pistol in hand, while they were yet some steps apart, "I shall, on one condition, grant you life."

"I seek not my life—at your hands least of all, Kaffir dog!" replied the other savagely, as he spat at him in the excess of his loathing.

"I might now shoot you down with my pistols," urged Harrower, "yet I shall spare you on one condition."

"If honourable, name it," said Bulli Sing, while his dark eyes glared like those of a hooded snake.

"Say where the princes are concealed—those cowardly Shahzaddahs who have lured so many brave men to destruction, and then left them to perish miserably?"

"Shahbash! true—true, too true!" replied the Mohammedan, stung to bitterness by the truth of the words, and half lowering his guard.

"Where, then, shall we seek for them—say, that I may grant you life, in the name of her Majesty the Queen? All is lost—their cause, and yours too—are alike gone. Speak, or with this pistol——"

"Po, po! put up your pistol; it is not in the power of lead or

steel to wring words from me. But why should the Shahzaddahs, who have not struck one blow for God or the Prophet, or for their own inheritance, escape when so many have died, and more are yet to die?" continued the soubadar in a burst of rage and bitterness; "you will find them in the Tomb of Homaion!" he added, throwing up his arms with a gesture of mingled despair and grief.

In such an airy locality this was a fatal movement; he lost his balance, vanished over the low parapet, and ere Harrower could again speak, or attempt to save him, he fell whizzing through space, a crushed and palpitating mass, at the feet of Major Hodson, who was seated in his saddle, impatiently below. This casualty scarcely excited wonder; it was only a unit in the mass of carnage, amid which they were involved.

Harrower hurried down to rejoin the Major, who was a very handsome man, with fine, regular features; his flowing white puggeree concealed a premature baldness, but he had close, crisp, curly hair at the temples, eyes clear and piercing, a nose perfectly straight, smart mustachios, and close-clipped beard, and he looked remarkably well in the dashing uniform of the Irregular Cavalry, which presented a marked contrast to the tattered turn-out of Jack Harrower, who was seeking to earn his cross of valour in a Garibaldi shirt and a pair of coarse linen trousers, with a shawl tied over his shoulders.

"Captain Harrower," said he, with a grim smile; "What the devil took that stupid Pandy up there? You have not been long in polishing him off at all events."

"Nay, Major—the poor wretch polished off himself."

"The deuce! committed suicide?"

"Something very like it."

"Did you get speech of him?"

"Yes—but he spoke enigmatically, I think."

"How?—the Princes——"

"Were, he said, in the tomb of Homaion."

"Dead or alive?" asked Hodson, impetuously.

"He did not say."

"Well, I shall have them out under any circumstances. Where is this tomb? Does any one know?" asked Hodson, shortening his reins.

"It stands about a mile westward of this," replied Harrower, leaping on horseback; "permit me to guide you."

"Forward, then!" cried the energetic Major to his troop, and conducted by Harrower, who knew the locality well, having shot all over it, with Mellon, Doyle, Douglas, and others, they set off at full speed for the famous tomb of Homaion.

CHAPTER LXXV

THE TOMB OF HOMAION.

BY the troopers, Baboo Bulli Sing was stripped of his rich steel cap, and most of his ornaments; there was an end of him, and he was bequeathed to the jackals.

Past the giant tower erected by Kutab-ad-deen, the loftiest and most magnificent column in the world, being built entirely of red granite and white marble, by the same Kutab who from being a slave, became King of Delhi in 1206, and past the garden of Kumrood-deen, rode Hodson, Harrower, and the picturesque looking troopers: on through Ferozebad, or ancient Delhi, which seems a veritable Babylon of desolation and ruins, studded with the last resting places of the Patan Kings (who built like giants, and finished their work like jewellers), and of many departed races in succession, the victors and the vanquished.

In the rear, the sound of cannon and of musketry had long since died away; but here and there the smoke of a burning house curled round the gilded minarets of Delhi, showing where still the Ghoorkha or the Punjabee pursued the pleasing work of pillage and destruction.

It was evening now, and the long shadow of the stately Kutab Minar fell from its broad base far across the ruins of old Ferozebad, even to the Lake Bastion of New Delhi; and now before the galloping troopers rose the beautiful façade of the tomb of Homaion, the son of Baber.

On a square plateau of one hundred and sixty-eight pointed arches, rises this edifice, which is of great height, having twelve open cupolas, and high over these, a round tower closed by a dome of vast extent and magnificence, and built entirely of milk-white marble.

This is the tomb of that Homaion who invaded Goojerat, made war on the Afghans, reconquered Delhi and Agra, and played a great game in the Indian world, about the time the Scots and English were breaking each other's heads under Henry VIII. and the little Queen Mary, in the wars of the Reformation. Built by his son, the Emperor Akbar, it forms one of the most pleasing features in that magnificent landscape, and near it is a ruined

pyramid, erroneously ascribed to Alexander after the defeat of Porus.

The shadows of the dewy evening were deepening fast, when Hodson's corps of guides, all resolute and determined men, nobly mounted and splendidly disciplined and equipped, drew up in line before the gates of that beautiful mausoleum; and when he and Harrower, the only two white men present, rode forward, fearlessly through a multitude, consisting of many thousands of armed men, fugitive sepoys, citizens of Delhi, ruined zemindars, and ryots, budmashes, and scoundrels of all kinds, rendered desperate by recent events, by slaughter, pillage, and the fear of approaching punishment. These men crowded in sullen and sombre masses under the arcades of the plateau on which the tomb is built, or hovered among the wilderness of ruined walls and neglected gardens around it.

The time was one of keen excitement to Harrower, and the officer to whom he had, on this occasion attached himself; for a single mistake, a premature shot, an act of useless violence or indecision, might bring destruction on them both, and on all their followers!

Harrower surveyed with deep interest the wondrous façade of the tomb, carved as it is so marvellously, like the finest lace-work, and the milk-white dome that was over all, its cold shadows rounding off into purple; and he hoped in his heart that now, at last, poor Polly Weston would be found, her story learned, and her sufferings avenged!

Though armed to the teeth, this multitude of men—the rabble of Delhi, and of all the revolted cities—were fairly cowed by the cool and resolute bearing of the Major, who sternly commanded them to lay down their arms, an order which many of them obeyed. Then dismounting, he and Harrower entered the building, in the centre of which is the sarcophagus of Homaion, covered with precious cloths from Mecca, constantly adorned with fresh flowers, and having hung around it many brilliant silver lamps, the oils of which diffuse an aromatic odour round the interior.

There were those who had been guilty of so many atrocious crimes, the two princes of Delhi, and their nephew, seeking as it were protection from the living, under the shadow of the dead.

The fat, sensual, and unmanly Shahzaddahs, started from the steps of the sarcophagus, their sleepy and almond-shaped eyes dilated, and their cheeks pale with terror, as they held up their flabby and begemmed hands in deprecation, while the more boyish ruffian, whose name was little known, save as an abettor of their outrages, salaamed with his forehead on the floor.

But we must be brief in the narration of events so recent.

The dark and scowling guards about there laid down their arms

on finding there was an unmistakable expression in the faces of the two officers who confronted them. Harrower looked eagerly round. There was no trace of Doctor Weston or of his daughter. Of all the many faces that appeared amid the half light and dusky obscurity of the building, the only white ones were Hodson's and his own.

"Sahibs," said Mogul, the elder brother, whose lips quivered with fear; "as ye hope for mercy on that day of wrath, when the solid rocks shall depart in flames and ashes—when the winnowing of the world past and present, shall come to pass, and the wheat be separated from the tares and chaff—so I say, as ye shall hope for mercy then, accord it now."

"Have mercy!" added Abubeker, bowing his head, while Hodson and Harrower surveyed them by turns, with disgust and astonishment—their bearing was so mean, so intensely abject.

"Mercy to you!" ejaculated the Major, who had a pistol in each hand.

"Even to us who have fallen," said Mogul.

"And why should we accord it?" asked Harrower, scornfully, in Hindostanee.

"Lest ye seek in vain for mercy on that awful day, when, as the blessed Koran hath it, the hills shall roll away before the breath of the Lord, even as carded wool rolleth before the wind of Heaven," whined Abubeker with a deep salaam.

Many of the sepoys and budmashes, excited by these words, and by the bearing of the Fakir Gunga Rai, began to resume their arms, and the capping and cocking of rifles were heard in the darker recesses of the tomb; but Hodson, stern and resolute as Ajax, was resolved not to be cheated of his prey.

"Mercy!" implored Mogul again.

"Such mercy as you showed to our helpless women and childen shall you have of us!" cried Hodson, and seeing a rescue imminent, he shot the three princes down in such rapid succession, that in the vibration of a pendulum, they were all lying bleeding on the floor.

Pierced through the head, Mirza Mogul and his nephew fell forward on their faces and never moved again; but a shrill cry escaped Abubeker, who had been shot in the region of the heart.

He writhed up on his hands and knees, with the blood pouring from his mouth, and the orifice in his chest; and now forgetting his English, he spoke entirely in Hindostanee, painfully, yet forcibly, and at intervals.

"Oh! brother Mogul, what is there now on this earth worth sorrowing for, and why should we begin here, in the tomb of Homaion? The power of the true prophet has failed us, even as that of the false god, Brahma. . . What are our riches, our gold, our diamonds and sapphires, but dross—what our fine

raiment, but food for moths—what our palaces, but the dust of generations in a new form—what our bodies but food for worms in the end? Yet a little time, and all shall come to this. Allah hath ordained it so. The hour in which we were to die was written on our foreheads—and the hour hath come!"

"Captain Harrower, you had better question this moralizing villain, ere it be too late," said Hodson, grimly, as he reloaded his pistols.

"Where is the youngest daughter of Weston sahib?" Harrower asked, earnestly, in the ear of Abubeker, over whose face the livid hue of death was stealing; "speak!" he urged, as the dark eyes dilated, and a cruel kind of smile played on the thick, but now pale lips—a smile of spite and hate—"do not die with a falsehood on your tongue—where is she?"

"Look for her—look for her——"

"Where—where?"

"Inside the Calcutta Gate," faltered the other, as the blood gushed from his mouth and nostrils, and he fell back dead on the marble floor.

A hoarse sound pervaded the hollows of the great tomb. Hodson thought it was the precursor of a terrible revenge; but it proved to be only the rising shout of the inconstant rabble, seeking to win the favour of the victors.

"Shabash! wah-wah—well done! Their crimes have met a just penalty!"

Even the wicked Sultana Zeenat Mahal could not have wished the removal of all between her son and the shadowy throne of Delhi more completely than Hodson's hand had achieved it!

"Off with their royal robes," said the inexorable major, in a voice of stern authority, "and hang these carrion naked by the neck, in the spot where so many Christian women and girls perished by their orders."

Ere this Harrower had started at a gallop for the Calcutta Gate, with terrible forebodings in his agitated breast. There, against the palace wall, which was shattered by cannon shot, and thickly starred by rifle bullets, was the body of a girl, snowy white, sorely emaciated, and nailed by her hands and feet against the masonry, with her golden hair—"that mute ornament which God has given to woman"—waving in ripples on the wind, as the head drooped forward, so that the once sweet young face was unseen!

* * * * * *

The crimson light of the setting sun was giving way to the shadows of night, that rose like a darkening tide on tower and dome as they gradually stole upward; but ere the last red ray had faded from the marble summit of the Kutab Minar, there might

be seen in the kotwally, or mayor's Court, in the Street of Silver, hung by the neck upon a common gibbet, naked to the girdle, and defiled with dust and gore, the remains of the three last descendants of the Great Mogul of Timour, he who, after conquering Persia and Transoxania, made himself Emperor of all India.

Three days and nights they hung there, ere the task of Nemesis was complete!

CHAPTER LXXVI.

THE HIGH ROAD TO OLD ENGLAND.

FROM these events and places we may gladly change the scene to the deck of the *Arcot*, one of those magnificent ships, the Peninsular and Oriental Liners, which was getting under weigh in the Hooghly, on an afternoon of the spring subsequent to the fall of Delhi, and the transportation of the old king and his Begum, Zeenat Mahal, by sentence of a general court-martial.

Crowded by passengers, and filled with luggage and goods, the *Arcot* had been warped out into the stream, while a golden haze enveloped land and water.

Upon her poop, seated on camp-stools, watching the interesting process of getting ready for sea, stowing cables and gear, shaking canvas out of the bunt, and so forth, and enjoying the while "a quiet weed," were Harrower and Mellon, with their wives smiling beside them, all happy in the consciousness that they were leaving behind greater sorrows and terrors than would be endured in this world again, and that once more they were restored to ease, to civilization, and to peace; and there, too, crouched at Lena's feet, upon a hassock, was the faithful ayah, Safiyah Bux, and her new charge, the little orphan of the Cashmere Gate, "Mamma's Pet," for he had as yet no other name.

The *Arcot* soon dropped down the windings of the shoaly and brackish Indian river to Garden Reach, where the Hooghly Pilot came on board, and from thence to Diamond Harbour.

The City of Palaces—the Chowringhee of the Nabobs and men

of money; the citadel of Fort William with its snow white barracks, greeu ramparts, and Gothic church; the Black Town, with hovels of mud, mats, and bamboo, and the opposite suburb of Howrah, were all passing swiftly like a dream or panorama, and ere long Diamond Harbour was asteru.

Like a dream, too, were the hideous Sonderbuns with their low stunted marshes, where the spotted hyænas lurked, the snakes hissed, and where the junglewood almost scrapes the steamer's side at times; where scarcely a bird is to be seen, and where, here and there, a rag fluttering from a bamboo indicates the spot where a tiger had torn a man to pieces.

On past the flags and ships of all the world; on past the last of the rich native row-boats, with gilded sterns, and peacocks painted at the prow; on past where crocodiles and sharks were gobbling at cockup, mango fish, and dead Hiudoos, whose friends had been too poor to burn them; on past "sea-girt Saugar's desert isle," where the Java fern and the Bukrah palm strive for existence amid the dark and oozy mud.

Midnight clangs from the ship's bell forward; the pilot has pocketed his fee, drunk his glass of brandy pauuee at the capstan head, and goue ashore iu his tug steamer, so the last link with India is brokeu. The lighthouse on the Sand Heads is now bearing west by uorth, and the country of the Rajahs and the Moguls, that laud of glory and splendour, of terror, disease, and death, is sinking fast astern into the world of waters.

Our friends lingered loug on deck that night.

Under the soothing influence of time, change of circumstances, and of scenc, the colour had come back to the soft cheeks of Kate Mellon, and even to those of Lena Harrower (we must give them their wedded names now), though by habit she was a pale girl, and not so brilliant in her beauty as the radiant blonde, her only sister now.

Their fellow voyagers were not, as Jack said, "likely to be a lively lot," there being amoug them many widows and orphans, and several sick and wounded officers, whose entire families had perished in the Great Mutiny of the preceding year.

He and Rowley Mellon were less patriarchal in their aspect now, thau they had been of late; their exuberant beards had been shaven off, and Rowley's had once more given place to his fashionable and cherished flyaway whiskers, just as the regimental rags, jerseys, and puggerees, in which they had been seeking the V.C., "even at the cannon's mouth," had beeu relinquished for soft Tweed suits and most unromantic wide-awakes.

Now the stately *Arcot* was out in the great Bay of Bengal; fast revolved the giant screw-propeller; there was white foam gleaming in the long wake astern, and the black funnel overhead poured out its broad pennant of smoke on the friendly breeze.

From the engine-room, where the drum and piston went clank, clank, clank incessantly, from the cuddy and cabin, strange weird lights gleamed redly upward at times, on mast, and spar, and sail, while smooth and blue the sea reflected the tint and the stars of the cloudless Indian sky.

Some invalid soldiers were joining the sailors in the forecastle bunks, in a song, and jovially the chorus of "Cheer, boys, cheer," mingled with the notes of a piano, that came tinkling softly at times from the ladies' cabin aft.

Hope gleams up in the hearts of the wedded quartette who linger at the taffrail, for they are on the watery highway to Europe —to old England and to home!

Much have Harrower and Lena to say yet, though they had been married at Ninee Tal; but now thoughts come too thick and fast for utterance and coherence.

Leeward of the fore and aft mainsail, and under the shelter of its friendly shadow, he could pass his arm unchecked round that soft and beautiful figure, in the blessed assurance that she was his at last—his own—and that their fullest and fondest anticipations of joy had been realized.

Now Lena might ponder as other girls have done, on the long, the shadowy, and the happy future, on wedded love, and a happy English home in rugged Cornwall, or perhaps again in dear Thorpe Audley; on children, little Jacks and Kates and Pollys springing up around her, and her golden hoop growing tighter as she waxed in plumpness and in years.

"Oh, Jack," she whispered, as she hid her face in his neck, "all we have endured seems like a terrible fantasy now!"

"A fantasy that is over, dearest Lena, with a blissful reality after it," said Harrower. "We are safe on the high-road to old England, at last, and you are by my side, Lena, my first, my last love, and my only one!"

THE END.

WYMAN AND SONS, PRINTERS, GREAT QUEEN STREET, LONDON, W.C.

LORD LYTTON'S NOVELS.

In Fancy Boards, price 2s. each volume.

RIENZI, THE LAST OF THE ROMAN TRIBUNES.
THE LAST OF THE BARONS.
PAUL CLIFFORD.
THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII.
GODOLPHIN.
NIGHT AND MORNING.
DEVEREUX.
PELHAM.
EUGENE ARAM.
THE DISOWNED.
ERNEST MALTRAVERS.
ALICE; OR, THE MYSTERIES.
ZANONI.
LUCRETIA; OR, THE CHILDREN OF NIGHT.
HAROLD, THE LAST OF THE SAXON KINGS.
A STRANGE STORY.
THE CAXTONS: A FAMILY PICTURE.
MY NOVEL. 2 Vols.
WHAT WILL HE DO WITH IT? 2 Vols.

Price 1s. each.

LEILA; OR, THE SIEGE OF GRANADA.
THE PILGRIMS OF THE RHINE.

ALSO,

THE LIBRARY EDITION OF LORD LYTTON'S NOVELS. The 23 Volumes, bound in 11, price £4. 3s., in Roxburgh Binding.

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS,
THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE.

EVERY BOY'S ANNUAL FOR 1869. Edited by EDMUND ROUTLEDGE. Containing 700 pages, full-page Illustrations, and Coloured Plates illustrative of Games, drawn expressly for this Annual, and printed in Kronheim's best style. 8vo. cloth, gilt edges, 6*s*.

THE FAMILY DOCTOR: a Dictionary of Domestic Medicine and Surgery, especially adapted for Family use. By a Dispensary Surgeon. With numerous Illustrations. 800 pages, crown 8vo. cloth, 3*s*. 6*d*.

JOHNNY JORDAN AND HIS DOG. By the Author of "Ernie Elton." With Illustrations. Fcap. 8vo. cloth, 3*s*. 6*d*.

WILL ADAMS, the First Englishman in Japan: A Romantic Biography. By WILLIAM DALTON. With Illustrations. Post 8vo. cloth, gilt edges, 5*s*.

THE BIBLE HISTORY OF THE HOLY LAND. By Dr. KITTO. Illustrated with numerous Illustrations and Maps. Royal 8vo. cloth, gilt edges, 7*s*. 6*d*.

ONCE UPON A TIME. By CHARLES KNIGHT. A new and enlarged edition. Crown 8vo. cloth, gilt edges, 5*s*.

MY FATHER'S GARDEN. By THOMAS MILLER. With Forty Illustrations. Post 8vo. cloth, 5*s*.

A PICTURE HISTORY OF ENGLAND, from the Invasion of Julius Cæsar to the Present Time. Written for the use of the Young by Dr. DULCKEN. With Eighty Engravings from the designs of A. W. BAYES. 4to. cloth, 5*s*.

THE WHITE BRUNSWICKERS; or, Reminiscences of Schoolboy Life. By the Rev. H. C. ADAMS, Author of "Cherry Stones," &c. With Illustrations. Fcap. 8vo. cloth, 5*s*.

MEN I HAVE KNOWN. By WILLIAM JERDAN. Illustrated with Facsimile Autographs. Post 8vo. cloth. 10*s*. 6*d*.

Novels, Cheap Literature,

AND

Useful Books,

PUBLISHED BY

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS,

THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE.

NOVELS AT ONE SHILLING.

(*Postage 3d.*)

By CAPTAIN MARRYAT.

Peter Simple.
The King's Own.
Midshipman Easy.
Rattlin the Reefer.
The Pacha of Many Tales.
Newton Forster.
Jacob Faithful.
The Dog Fiend.
Japhet in Search of a Father.
The Poacher.
The Phantom Ship.
Percival Keene.
Valerie.
Frank Mildmay.
Olla Podrida.
Monsieur Violet.

By J. FENIMORE COOPER.

The Pilot.
The Last of the Mohicans.
The Pioneers.
The Spy.
Lionel Lincoln.
The Deerslayer.
The Pathfinder.
The Bravo.
The Waterwitch.
The Two Admirals.
The Red Rover.
Satanstoe.
Afloat and Ashore.
Wyandotte.
Eve Effingham.
Miles Wallingford.
The Headsman.
The Prairie.
Homeward Bound.
The Borderers.
The Sea Lions.
Precaution.
The Oak Openings.
Mark's Reef.
Ned Myers.
The Heidenmauer.

By G. P. R. JAMES.

Morley Ernstein.
Darnley.
The Gipsy.
Arabella Stuart.
The Woodman.
Agincourt.
Russell.
The Stepmother.
Forest Days.
The Huguenot.
The Man-at-Arms.
A Whim and its Consequences.
Henry Masterton.
The Convict.
Mary of Burgundy.
Attila.
Margaret Graham.
Gowrie.
Delaware.
Henry of Guise.
Dark Scenes.
The Robber.
One in a Thousand.
The Smuggler.
Charles Tyrrell.
Castleneau.
Sir Theodore Broughton.
The Forgery.
The Gentleman of the Old School.
The Jacquerie.
Philip Augustus.
The Black Eagle.
Rose D'Albret.
The Old Dominion.
Leonoro D'Orco.
John Marston Hall.
Beauchamp.
Arrah Neil.
My Aunt Pontypool.

By ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

The Three Musketeers.
Twenty Years After.
Doctor Basilius.
The Twin Captains.
Captain Paul.
Memoirs of a Physician. 2vols.
The Queen's Necklace.
The Chevalier de Maison Rouge.
The Countess de Charney.
Monte Cristo. 2 vols.
Nanon; or Woman's War.
The Two Dianas.
The Black Tulip.

By W. H. AINSWORTH.

Windsor Castle.
Tower of London.
The Miser's Daughter.
Rookwood.
Old St. Paul's.
Crichton.
Guy Fawkes.
The Spendthrift.
James the Second.
The Star Chamber.
The Flitch of Bacon.
The Lancashire Witches.
Mervyn Clitheroe.
Ovingdean Grange.
St. James'.
Auriol.
Jack Sheppard.

Suitable for the Country and Sea-side.

By VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Stories of Waterloo. *W. H. Maxwell.*
The Colleen Bawn; or, the Collegians. *Gerald Griffin.*
Dark Lady. *W. H. Maxwell.*
Violet, the Danseuse.
Royal Favourite. *Mrs. Gore.*
The Ghost Hunter. *Banim.*
The Ambassador's Wife. *Mrs. Gore.*
The Old Commodore. *Author of "Rattlin the Reefer."*
The Albatross. *Kingston.*
Cinq Mars. *De Vigny.*
Zingra, the Gipsy. *Mrs. Maillard.*
The Ladder of Life. *Amelia B. Edwards.*
The Pride of the Mess. *Author of "Cavendish."*
Lilly Dawson. *Mrs. Crowe.*
My Brother's Keeper. *Miss Wetherell.*
Scarlet Letter. *Hawthorn.*
The House of the Seven Gables. *Hawthorn.*
Whom to Marry, &c. *Mayhew.*
The Henpecked Husband. *Lady Scott.*
The Little Wife. *Mrs. Gore.*
Adelaide Lindsay. *Author of "Emilia Wyndham."*
The Family Feud. *Thomas Cooper.*
Nothing but Money. *T. S. Arthur.*
The Letter Bag of the Great Western. *Sam Slick.*
Respectable Sinners.
Moods. *Louisa M. Alcott.*
Singleton Fontenoy. *James Hannay.*

NOVELS AT TWO SHILLINGS.

(Postage, 4d.)

By JAMES GRANT.

The Romance of War; or, The Highlanders in Spain.
The Aide-de-Camp.
The Scottish Cavalier.
Bothwell.
Jane Seton; or, The Queen's Advocate.
Philip Rollo.
Legends of the Black Watch.
Mary of Lorraine.
Oliver Ellis; or, The Fusilier.
Lucy Arden; or, Hollywood Hall.
Frank Hilton; or, The Queen's Own.
The Yellow Frigate.
Harry Ogilvie; or, The Black Dragoons.
Arthur Blane.
Laura Everingham; or, The Highlanders of Glenora.
The Captain of the Guard.
Letty Hyde's Lovers.
Cavaliers of Fortune.
Second to None; or, The Scots Greys.
The Constable of France.
The Phantom Regiment.
The King's Own Borderers.
The White Cockade.

Published by George Routledge & Sons.

By ALBERT SMITH.

The Adventures of Mr. Ledbury.
The Scattergood Family.
Christopher Tadpole.
The Pottleton Legacy.
The Marchioness of Brinvilliers. 1*s.* 6*d.*
The Medical Student. 1*s.*

By MISS WETHERELL.

The Old Helmet.
Melbourne House.
Ellen Montgomery's Book-Shelf.
The Two School-Girls.
The Wide, Wide World.
Queechy.

By ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

The Half-Brothers.
Marguerite de Valois.
Vicomte de Bragelonne. Vols. 1 and 2. 2*s.* 6*d. each vol.*

By HENRY COCKTON.

Percy Effingham.
Valentine Vox.
Stanley Thorn.
George Julian.

By AUTHOR OF "WHITEFRIARS."

Whitehall.
Cæsar Borgia.
Owen Tudor.
The City Banker.
Mauleverer's Divorce.

By VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Price 2*s. each.*

The Night Side of Nature. *Mrs. Crowe.*
Scottish Chiefs. *Jane Porter.*
Pastor's Fireside. *Jane Porter.*
The Prairie Bird. *Hon. C. A. Murray.*
Captain Blake. *Maxwell.*
Colin Clink. *Hooton.*
Hector O'Halloran. *Maxwell.*
Country Curate. *G. R. Gleig.*
The Clockmaker. (2*s.* 6*d.*) *Sam Slick.*
Rory O'More. *Samuel Lover.*
The Manœuvring Mother. *Author of "The Flirt."*
The Two Frigates. *Cupples.*
Soldier of Lyons. *Mrs. Gore.*
The Pirate of the Mediterranean. *Kingston.*
Mothers and Daughters. *Mrs. Gore.*
The Pride of Life. *Lady Scott.*
Who is to Have it?
The Two Convicts. *Gerstaecker.*

Suitable for the Country and Sea-side.

BY VARIOUS AUTHORS—*continued.*

Feathered Arrow. *Gerstaecker.*
The Secret of a Life. *M. M. Bell.*
Caleb Stukely. *Sam. Phillips.*
Iron Cousin. *Mrs. C. Clark.*
Each for Himself. *Gerstaecker.*
Sir Roland Ashton. *Lady C. Long.*
The Greatest Plague of Life. *Mayhew.*
The Young Curate.
Matrimonial Shipwrecks. *Mrs. Maillard.*
Hajji Baba of Ispahan. *Morier.*
The Two Baronets. *Lady Charlotte Bury.*
Emily Chester.
The Man of Fortune. *Albany Fonblanque, Jun.*
Black and Gold. *Captain Patten Saunders.*
The First Lieutenant's Story. *Lady C. Long.*
Vidocq, the French Police Spy.
Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea.
Lamplighter. *Miss Cummins.*
Tom Jones. *Fielden.*
Handy Andy. *Lover.*
Gideon Giles. *Thomas Miller.*
Ben Brace. *Captain Chamier.*
The Hussar. *Gleig.*
Roderick Random. *Smollett.*
The Parson's Daughter. *Theodore Hook.*
Guy Livingstone.
Running the Gauntlet *Edmund Yates.*
Kissing the Rod. *Ditto.*
Sir Victor's Choice. *Annie Thomas.*
The Two Midshipmen. *Captain Armstrong.*
All in the Wrong. *Theodore Hook.*
Outward Bound. *By Author of "Rattlin the Reefer."*
The Widow and the Marquess. *Theodore Hook.*
The Flying Dutchman.
Joseph Andrews. *Fielding.*
Dr. Goethe's Courtship.
Half a Million of Money. *A. B Edwards.*

RAILWAY LIBRARY.

Price 1*s.* 6*d. each. (Postage* 4*d.)*

The Hour and the Man. *Martineau.*
Northanger Abbey. *Miss Austin.*
Peregrine Bunce. *Theodore Hook.*
The Only Daughter. *Gleig.*
Robinson Crusoe. Illustrated.
Swiss Family Robinson. do.
Sandford and Merton. do.
Evenings at Home. do.

Published by George Routledge & Sons.

ROUTLEDGE'S SIXPENNY NOVELS.

By J. F. COOPER.

The Waterwitch.
The Pathfinder.
The Deerslayer.
The Last of the Mohicans.
The Pilot.
The Prairie.
Eve Effingham.
The Spy.
The Red Rover.
Homeward Bound.
The Two Admirals.
Miles Wallingford.
The Pioneers.
Wyandotte.
Lionel Lincoln.
Afloat and Ashore.
The Bravo.
The Sea Lions.
The Headsman.
Precaution.
The Oak Openings.
The Heidenmauer.
Mark's Reef.
Ned Myers.
Satanstoe.
The Borderers.

By SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Guy Mannering.
The Antiquary.
Ivanhoe.
The Fortunes of Nigel.
The Heart of Midlothian.
The Bride of Lammermoor.
Waverley.
Rob Roy.
Kenilworth.
The Pirate.
The Monastery.
Old Mortality.
Peveril of the Peak.
Quentin Durward.
St. Ronan's Well.
The Abbot.

By VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Robinson Crusoe.
Uncle Tom's Cabin. *Mrs. Stowe.*
Colleen Bawn. *Gerald Griffin.*
Vicar of Wakefield.
Sketch Book. *Washington Irving.*
Tristram Shandy. *Sterne.*
Sentimental Journey. *Do.*
English Opium Eater. *De Quincey.*
Essays of Elia. *Chas. Lamb.*
Notre Dame. *Victor Hugo.*
Roderick Random. *Smollett.*
Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.
Tom Jones. 2 vols. *Fielding.*
Artemus Ward, his Book.
A. Ward among the Mormons.
The Nasby Papers.
Major Jack Downing.
The Biglow Papers.
Orpheus C. Kerr.
The Wide, Wide World. (Double vol., 1*s.*)
Queechy. (Double vol., 1*s.*)

ROUTLEDGE'S CHEAP LITERATURE.

Price 1*s. each.*

Life of Nelson. *Allen.*
The Vicar of Wakefield. *Goldsmith.*
Bundle of Crowquills. *Crowquill.*
Infidelity: its Cause and Cure. *Nelson.*
The Hidden Path. *Harland.*
Acting Proverbs. *Harwood.*
A Lady's Captivity among Chinese Pirates. *F. Laviot.*
Pilgrim's Progress. *Bunyan.*
Balthazar; or, Science and Love. *Balzac.*
The Christmas Hamper. *Mark Lemon.*
The Medical Student. *Albert Smith.*
Love Tales, by Heyse. *Edited by G. H. Kingsley.*
Riddles and Jokes. 3rd Series. *E. Routledge.*
Advertise: How? When? Where? *W. Smith.*
Adventures of a Sporting Dog.
Sam Spangles. *Stirling Coyne.*
Mrs. Jones' Evening Party. *E. Routledge.*
Toddles' Highland Tour. *E. Routledge.*
New Charades for the Drawing Room. *Author of "A Trap to Catch a Sunbeam."*
The Sparrowgrass Papers; or, Living in the Country.
A Sea-side Sensation. *Charles Ross.*
Lives of Conservative Statesmen.
Fly Notes on Conjuring. *Col. Stodare.*
A Week with Mossoo. *C. Ross.*
Recollections of Harrow.
Mixed Sweets.
Mrs. Brown's Visit to Paris. *Arthur Sketchley.*
Miss Tomkins' Intended. *Do.*
The Public School Matches.
The Celebrated Jumping Frog. *Mark Twain.*
On the Cards.
On the Road.

Price 1*s.* 6*d. each.*

Hills of the Shatemuc. *Miss Warner.*
Flood and Field. *Maxwell.*
A Mounted Trooper's Adventures in the Australian Constabulary. *W. Burrows.*
Echoes from the Backwoods. *Sir R. Levinge.*
Land and Sea Tales. *The Old Sailor.*
Life of Admiral Lord Dundonald. *Allen.*

Price 2*s. each.*

Forest Life in Norway and Sweden. *Newland.*
Eminent Men, and Popular Books. *Reprinted from "The Times."*
Biography and Criticism. *Do.*
Sporting in both Hemispheres. *D'Ewes.*
Marvels of Science. *Fullom.*
Horses and Hounds. *Scrutator.*
Life in China. *Milne.*
Life of Julius Cæsar. *Archdeacon Williams.*
A Cruise upon Wheels. *C. A. Collins.*

BOOKS FOR THE COUNTRY.

With Numerous Illustrations. Price 1*s. each. (Postage,* 2*d.)*

Angling, and Where to Go. *Blakey.*
Pigeons and Rabbits, in their Wild, Domestic, and Captive State, with Illustrations by Weir. *Delamer.*
Shooting. Illustrated by Harrison Weir. *Blakey.*
The Sheep: our Domestic Breeds, and their Treatment. Illustrations by Harvey. *W. C. L. Martin.*
Flax and Hemp: their Culture and Manipulation. With Plates. *Delamer.*
The Poultry Yard, comprising the Management of Fowls. Illustrated by H. Weir. *E. Watts.*
The Horse. Illustrated by Wells. *Cecil and Youatt.*
Bees: their Habits, Management, and Treatment, &c. *Rev. J. G. Wood.*
Cage and Singing Birds. *H. G. Adams.*
Small Farms, and How they ought to be Managed. *M. Doyle.*
The Kitchen Garden. *Delamer.*
The Flower Garden. *Delamer.*
The Common Objects of the Sea Shore. Boards. Illustrated with Coloured Plates. *Rev. J. G. Wood, M.A.*
The Common Objects of the Country. Boards. Illustrated with Coloured Plates. *Rev. J. G. Wood, M.A.*
Woodlands, Heaths, and Hedges. Boards. *Coleman.*
British Ferns. Boards. Coloured Plates. *Thomas Moore, F.L.S.*
Favourite Flowers: How to Grow Them. *A. G. Sutton.*
British Butterflies. With 200 Illustrations. Boards. *Coleman.*
Hints for Farmers. *R. Scott Burn.*
English Birds' Eggs and Nests. Illustrations by W. S. Coleman. Boards. *Rev. F. C. Atkinson.*
Life of a Nag Horse. Fcap. 8vo. Boards. *J. Taylor.*
A Field Full of Wonders. Illustrated. Boards. *C. S. Cheltnam.*
Food, Feeding, and Manure. *Sibson.*
Mr. Mechi's Farm Balance-Sheets, Lectures, and Papers on Farming.
Crab, Shrimp, and Lobster Lore. *W. B. Lord, R.A.*

Price 1*s.* 6*d. each.* (*Postage,* 2*d.*)

Cattle: their History and Various Breeds, Management, Treatment, and Diseases. Revised by W. and H. Raynbird. *W. C. L. Martin.*
The Rat. With Anecdotes. *Uncle James.*
Dogs: their Management in Health and Disease. With Illustrations. *Edward Mayhew, M.R.C.V.S.*
British Timber Trees. *John Blenkarn.*

BOOKS FOR THE COUNTRY—*continued.*

Haunts of the Wild Flowers. Illustrated by Noel Humphreys. Boards. *Anne Pratt.*

Scientific Farming made Easy. Foap. 8vo. *T. C. Fletcher, Analytical Chemist.*

Horse-Taming, Horsemanship, and Hunting. *Rarey and Sidney.*

The Pig: How to Choose, Breed, Rear, Keep, and Cure. *Youatt and Sidney.*

Price 2s., in boards.

Wild Flowers: Where to Find and How to Know Them. Illustrated. *Spencer Thomson.*

The Fine Edition, printed on superior paper in a large type, with the Plates printed in Colours, fcap. 8vo, gilt.
Price 2s. 6d. each. (*Postage*, 4*d.*)

Common Objects of the Sea Shore. *Rev. J. G. Wood, M.A.*
Common Objects of the Country. *Rev. J. G. Wood, M.A.*
Woodlands, Heaths, and Hedges. *Coleman.*
British Ferns and Allied Plants. *Moore.*
British Butterflies. *Coleman.*
British Birds' Eggs and Nests. *Atkinson.*
Wild Flowers. *Spencer Thomson.*
Common Objects of the Microscope. *Rev. J. G. Wood, M.A.*
Haunts of the Wild Flowers. *Anne Pratt.*
The Kitchen and Flower Garden. *E. S. Delamer.*
The Fresh and Salt-water Aquarium. (3*s.* 6*d.*) *Rev. J. G. Wood, M.A.*

ROUTLEDGE'S SIXPENNY HANDBOOKS.

With Illustrations, and Illustrated Boarded Covers.
(*Postage* 1*d.*)

Swimming and Skating.
Gymnastics.
Chess, with Diagrams.
Whist.
Billiards and Bagatelle.
Draughts and Backgammon.
Cricket.
The Cardplayer.
Rowing and Sailing.
Riding and Driving.
Conundrums.
Archery, Fencing, and Broad-sword.
Manly Exercises; Boxing, Running, and Training.
Croquet.
Fishing.
Ball Games.
Conjuring.
Football.
Quoits and Bowls.

ROUTLEDGE'S USEFUL LIBRARY.

INCLUDING THE SHILLING LAW BOOKS.

In fcap. 8vo, cloth limp or illustrated bds. (Postage 2d.)

Ladies' and Gentlemen's Letter Writer, containing Letters on the Simplest Matters of Life, with Applications for Situations, and a Copious Appendix of Forms of Addresses, &c.

*** *The Ladies' and Gentlemen's Letter Writer, in Separate Books, 6d. each.*

Martin Doyle's Things Worth Knowing, a Book of General Practical Utility.

Landlord and Tenant (The Law of), with an Appendix of Useful Forms, Glossary of Law Terms. *W. A. Holdsworth.*

History of France, from the Earliest Period to the Peace of Paris, 1856. *Amelia B. Edwards.*

Wills, Executors, and Administrators (The Law of), with Useful Forms. *W. A. Holdsworth.*

Rundell's Domestic Cookery, unabridged, with illustrations. *W. T. Coleman, M.D.*

Notes on Health; How to Preserve and Regain it.

Common Objects of the Microscope, with 400 Illustrations by Tuffen West. *Rev. J. G. Wood.*

The Law of Bankruptcy. *W. A. Holdsworth.*

One Thousand Hints for the Table, including Wines.

The County Court Guide, with Forms. *W. A. Holdsworth.*

Geology for the Million, by M. Plues, edited by Rev. J. G. Wood.

A Handy Book of Criminal Law. *W. A. Holdsworth.*

The Licensed Victuallers' Handbook. *Do.*

How to Make Money. *E. T. Freedley.*

Infant Management. *Mrs. Pedley.*

Practical Housekeeping. *Mrs. Pedley.*

A Manual of Weathercasts. *Steinmetz.*

Commercial Letter Writer. *P. L. Simmonds.*

The Law of Cabs and Omnibuses. *W. T. Charley.*

Home Book of Domestic Economy. *Anne Bowman.*

Common Things of Every Day Life. *Anne Bowman.*

A Handbook of English Prose and Dramatic Literature.

A Handbook of English Poetry.

Price 1s. 6d. each.

Landmarks of the History of England. *Rev. Jas. White.*

Landmarks of the History of Greece, with a Map. *Do.*

Price 2s.

The Family Lawyer. *A. Fonblanque.*

ROUTLEDGE'S SHILLING SONG BOOKS.

EDITED AND COMPILED BY J. E. CARPENTER.

Fcap. 24*mo*, *boards*, *with fancy covers.* (*Postage* 2*d.*)

The Modern Song Book.
The Popular Song Book.
The New Universal Song Book.
The Comic Song Book.
The Humorous Song Book.
The New British Song Book.
The Entertainer's Song Book.
The New Standard Song Book.
The Comic Vocalist.
The New Scotch Song Book.
The New Irish Song Book.
The Moral Song Book.
The Religious Song Book.

ROUTLEDGE'S SIXPENNY SONG BOOKS.

EDITED BY J. E. CARPENTER.

Each 144 *pp. fcap.* 24*mo*, *fancy covers.* (*Postage* 1*d.*)

The Fire-Side Song Book.
The Home Songster.
The British Song Book.
Songs for all Ages.
The Select Songster.
The Convivial Songster.
Merry Songs for Merry Meetings.
The Funny Man's Song Book.
The Fashionable Song Book.
The Drawing Room Song Book.
The Laughable Song Book.
The Sensation Songster.
Everybody's Song Book.
The Social Song Book.
The Family Song Book.
The Amusing Songster.
The Social Songster.
Songs for all Seasons.
The Droll Ditty Song Book.
The Whimsical Songster.
The Highland Songster.
The Blue Bell Songster.
The Shamrock Songster.
The Mavourneen Songster.
The Sacred Songster.
The Devout Songster.
Songs for the Righteous.
Songs of Grace.

ROUTLEDGE'S CHEAP COOKERY BOOKS.

Routledge's New Cookery Book. *7s. 6d. Anne Bowman.*
Francatelli's Cookery. *6d.*
Soyer's Cookery for the People. *1s.*
Mrs. Rundell's Domestic Cookery. *1s.*
One Thousand Hints for the Table. *1s.*
Mrs. Rundell's Domestic Cookery. *2s.*
The British Cookery Book. *3s. 6d.*

ROUTLEDGE'S HOUSEHOLD MANUALS.

Price 6d. each. (*Postage 1d.*)

The Cook's Own Book.
The Lady's Letter Writer.
Gentleman's Letter Writer.
The Village Museum.
How to Cook Apples in 100 Ways.
How to Cook Eggs in 100 Ways.
How to Cook Rabbits in 124 Ways.
Everyday Blunders in Speaking
How to Cook Potatoes.
How to Cook Fish.
The Lover's Letter Writer.
Cholera, by Dr. Lankester.
Home Nursing.
How to Make Soups.
How to Cook Onions.
Good Food. *Dr. Lankester.*
Dinners and Housekeeping.
How to Preserve Fruit.
Routledge's Recipe Book.
Ready Remedies for Common Complaints.
How to Dress Salad.
How to Cook Game.
How to Make Cakes.
Lady Housekeeper's Poultry Yard.
How to Cook Vegetables.

ROUTLEDGE'S 6d. MINIATURE LIBRARY.

Cloth, gilt edges. (*Postage 1d.*)

The Language of Flowers.
Etiquette for Gentlemen.
Etiquette for Ladies.
Etiquette of Courtship and Matrimony.
The Ball-Room Manual.
Carving.
Toasts and Sentiments.
How to Dress Well.

BEADLE'S LIBRARY.

Price 6d. each.

Seth Jones.
Alice Wilde.
The Frontier Angel.
Malaeska.
Uncle Ezekiel.
Massasoit's Daughter.
Bill Biddon, Trapper.
The Backwoods' Bride.
Nat Todd.
Myra, the Child of Adoption.
The Golden Belt.
Sybil Chase.
Monowano, the Shawnee Spy.
Brethren of Coast.
King Barnaby.
The Forest Spy.
The Far West.
The Riflemen of Miami.
Alicia Newcombe.
The Hunter's Cabin.
The Block House.
The Allens.
Esther ; or, The Oregon Trail.
Ruth Margerie.
Oonomoo, the Huron.
The Gold Hunters.
The Two Guards.
Single Eye, the Indians' Terror.
Mabel Meredith.
Ahmo's Plot.
The Scout.
The King's Man.
Kent, the Ranger.
The Peon Prince.
Irona.
Laughing Eyes.
Mahaska, the Indian Queen.
The Slave Sculptor.
Myrtle.
Indian Jem.
The Wrecker's Bride.
The Brigantine.
The Indian Queen.
The Moose Hunter.
The Cave Child.
The Lost Trail.
The Wreck of the Albion.
Joe Davis's Client.
The Cuban Heiress.
The Hunter's Escape.
The Silver Bugle.
Pomfret's Ward.
Quindaro.
The Rival Scouts.
The Trapper's Pass.
The Hermit.
The Oronoco Chief.
On the Plains.
The Scout's Prize.
Red Plume.
The Three Hunters.
The Secret Shot.
The Prisoner of the Mill.
The Black Hollow.
The Seminole Chief.
On the Deep.
Captain Molly.
Star Eyes.
The Twin Scouts.
The Mad Skipper.
Little Moccasin.
The Doomed Hunter.
Eph Peters.
The Fugitives.
Big Foot, the Guide.
Ruth Harland.
Karaibo.
The Shawnee's Foe.
The Creole Sisters.
The Mohigan Bride.
The Maid of Wyoming.
The Hunchback.
Bald Eagle.
Old Jupe.

ROUTLEDGE'S CHEAP DICTIONARIES.

EDITED BY DR. NUTTALL.

Well printed. Bound in cloth.

Walker's Pronouncing Dictionary, containing all the New Words. 1*s.*

Diamond Dictionary, 640 pages, 25,000 words, clear type. 1*s.*

Johnson's Dictionary, adapted to the Present State of Literature. 1*s.*

Johnson's Dictionary. 1*s.*

Webster's Pronouncing Dictionary: 2,000 New Words; Scripture Names. 1*s.*

Johnson's Pocket Dictionary, with Walker's Pronunciation. 32mo. 9*d.*

Johnson's Pocket Dictionary. Royal 32mo. 6*d.*

Nuttall's, Dr., Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language. Founded on Walker, Webster, Worcester, Craig, Ogilvie. Cloth, 800 pages, 3*s.* 6*d.*; Roxburghe binding, gilt tops, 5*s.*

CHEAP RECKONERS.

Masters' Ready Reckoner, 17th Edition, Edited by John Heaton, comprises Tables of Interest, Commission, Wages, Percentage and Profit, Time, Weights and Measures, Decimal Tables, &c. 1*s.*

The Miniature Ready Reckoner. 6*d.*

The Tradesman's Ready Calculator of Measurement for Masons, Plasterers, Painters, &c. Shows the contents, in square yards, of any space measured in feet and inches. 6*d.*

Routledge's Ready Reckoner. By John Heaton. 1*s.* 6*d.*

ROUTLEDGE'S PENNY TABLE BOOK.

64 pages of Useful Information.

Routledge's Cheap Literature (continued).

Price 2s. each. (Postage 4*d.*

184 Forest Life in Norway and Sweden *Newland.*
189 Marvels of Science *Fullom.*
195 Eminent Men and Popular Books *Reprinted from the "Times."*
230 Biography and Criticism. *Reprinted from the "Times."*
246 Sporting in both Hemispheres *D'Ewes.*
254 Horses and Hounds *Scrutator.*
256 Life in China *Milne.*
273 Life of Julius Cæsar *Archdeacon Williams.*
277 A Cruise upon Wheels *C. A. Collins.*

ROUTLEDGE'S SIXPENNY NOVELS.

COOPER.
1 Waterwitch
2 Pathfinder
3 Deerslayer
4 Mohicans
5 Pilot
6 Prairie
7 Eve Evingham
8 Spy
9 Red Rover
10 Homeward Bound

COOPER.
11 Two Admirals
12 Miles Walingford
13 Pioneers
14 Wyandotte
15 Lionel Lincoln
16 Afloat and Ashore
17 Bravo
18 Sea Lions
19 The Headsman
20 Precaution

VARIOUS.
A. Ward, His Book
——— Among the Mormons
Nasby Papers
Major Jack Downing
Biglow Papers
Orpheus C. Kerr
Robinson Crusoe
Uncle Tom's Cabin
Colleen Bawn

BEADLE'S LIBRARY.

1 Seth Jones
2 Alice Wilde
3 Frontier Angel
4 Malaeska
5 Uncle Ezekiel
6 Massasoit's Daughter
7 Bill Biddon, Trapper
8 Backwood's Bride
9 Natt Todd
10 Myra, the Child of Adoption
11 The Golden Belt
12 Sybil Chase
13 Monowano, the Shawnee Spy
14 Brethren of Coast
15 King Barnaby
16 The Forest Spy
17 The Far West
18 Riflemen of Miami
19 Alicia Newcombe
20 Hunter's Cabin
21 The Block House
22 The Allens
23 Esther; or the Oregon Trail
24 Ruth Margerie
25 Oonomoo, the Huron
26 The Gold Hunters
27 The Two Guards
28 Single Eye, the Indians' Terror
29 Mabel Meredith
30 Ahmo's Plot
31 The Scout
32 The King's Man
33 Kent, the Ranger
34 The Peon Prince
35 Irona
36 Laughing Eyes
37 Mahaska, the Indian Queen
38 Slave Sculptor
39 Myrtle
40 Indian Jim
41 Wrecker's Prize
42 The Brigantine
43 The Indian Queen
44 Moose Hunter
45 The Cave Child
46 The Lost Trail
47 Wreck of Albion
48 Joe Davis's Client
49 Cuban Heiress
50 Hunter's Escape
51 The Silver Bugle
52 Pomfret's Ward
53 Quindaro
54 Rival Scouts.
55 Trapper's Pass
56 The Hermit
57 Oronoco Chief
58 On the Plains
59 The Scout's Prize
60 Red Plume
61 Three Hunters
62 The Secret Shot
63 Prisoner of the Mill
64 Black Hollow
65 Seminole Chief
66 On the Deep
67 Captain Molly
68 Star Eyes
69 The Twin Scouts
70 The Mad Skipper
71 Little Mocassin
72 Doomed Hunter
73 Eph Peters
74 The Fugitives
75 Big Foot, the Guide
76 Ruth Harland
77 Karaibo
78 The Shawnee's Foe
79 The Creole Sisters

ROUTLEDGE'S CHEAP COOKERY BOOKS.

Francatelli's Cookery. 6*d.*
Soyer's Cookery for the People. 1*s.*
Mrs. Rundell's Domestic Cookery. 1*s.*
One Thousand Hints for the Table. 1*s.*
Mrs. Rundell's Domestic Cookery. 2*s.*
The British Cookery Book. 3*s.* 6*d.*

LONDON: GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS.

ROUTLEDGE'S BOOKS FOR THE COUNTRY.

Price One Shilling per Volume, unless specified. (Postage 2*d.*)

In limp cloth Covers or Ornamental Boards, with Illustrations.

1 Angling, and Where to Go. *Blakey.*
2 Pigeons and Rabbits *Delamer.*
3 Shooting *Blakey.*
4 The Sheep *Martin.*
5 Flax and Hemp *Delamer.*
6 The Poultry Yard *Watts.*
8 Cattle. 1*s.* 6*d.* *Martin & Raynbird.*
10 The Horse *Cecil and Youatt.*
11 Bees *Rev. J. G. Wood.*
12 Cage and Singing Birds. *H. G. Adams.*
13 Small Farms *M. Doyle.*
*14 The Kitchen Garden *Delamer.*
*15 The Flower Garden *Delamer.*
16 Rural Economy *M. Doyle.*
17 Farm and Garden Produce *M. Doyle.*
*18 Common Objects of the Sea Shore, with coloured illustrations *Rev. J. G. Wood.*
*19 Common Objects of the Country, with coloured illustrations *Rev. J. G. Wood.*
20 Agricultural Chemistry. 1*s.* 6*d.* *Sibson and Voelcker.*
*21 Woodlands, Heaths, and Hedges *Coleman.*
*22 British Ferns, illustrated by W. S. Coleman. *Thos. Moore, F.L.S.*
23 Favourite Flowers: How to Grow them. *A. G. Sutton.*
*24 British Butterflies. *W. S. Coleman.*
25 The Rat, its History, with Anecdotes by Uncle James, 1*s.* 6d.
26 Dogs, their Management, &c. 1*s.* 6*d.* *Edward Mayhew.*
27 Hints for Farmers. *R. Scott Burn.*
*28 British Birds' Eggs and Nests *Rev. J. C. Atkinson.*
29 British Timber Trees. 1*s.* 6d. *Blenkarn.*
*30 Wild Flowers. 2*s.* *Spencer Thompson.*
31 Life of a Nag Horse, &c. *Taylor.*
32 Field full of Wonders *C. S. Cheltnam.*
*33 Haunts of the Wild Flowers. 1*s.* 6*d.* *Miss Pratt.*
34 Scientific Farming made Easy. 1*s.* 6*d.* *T. C. Fletcher.*
35 Food, Feeding, and Manure *Alfred Sibson.*
36 Horse-Taming, Horsemanship, and Hunting, illustrated. 1*s.* 6*d.* *J. S. Rarey.*
37 The Pig. 1*s.* 6d. *Martin and Raynbird.*
38 Mr. Mechi's Farm Balance-Sheets, Lectures, and Papers on Farming

* FINE EDITIONS PRINTED ON SUPERIOR PAPER, IN A LARGE TYPE, WITH THE PLATES PRINTED IN COLOURS, FCAP. 8VO., GILT. *Price* 2*s.* 6*d. each.* (Postage 4d.)

ROUTLEDGE'S SIXPENNY HANDBOOKS.

With Illustrations, and illustrated boarded covers. (Postage 1*d.*)

1 Swimming & Skating
2 Gymnastics
3 Chess, with Diagrams
4 Whist
5 Billiards & Bagatelle
6 Draughts and Backgammon
7 Cricket
8 The Cardplayer
9 Rowing and Sailing
10 Riding and Driving
11 Archery, Fencing, and Broadsword
12 Conundrums
13 Manly Exercises; Boxing, Running, Training, &c.
15 Croquet
16 Fishing
17 Ball Games
18 Conjuring

ROUTLEDGE'S HOUSEHOLD MANUALS.

Price 6*d. each.* (Postage 1*d.*)

1 The Cook's Own Book
2 Ladies' Letter Writer
3 Gentlemen's Letter Writer
4 The Village Museum
5 How to Cook Apples in 100 Ways
6 How to Cook Eggs in 100 Ways
7 How to Cook Rabbits in 124 Ways
8 Everyday Blunders in Speaking
9 How to Cook Potatoes
10 How to Cook Fish
11 The Lover's Letter Writer
12 Cholera, by Dr. Lankester
13 Home Nursing
14 How to make Soups
15 How to Cook Onions
16 Good Food *Dr. Lankester.*
17 Dinners and Housekeeping
18 How to Preserve Fruit
19 Routledge's Recipe Book
20 Ready Remedies for Common Complaints
21 How to Dress Salad
22 How to Cook Game

LONDON: GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS.

ROUTLEDGE'S SONG BOOKS.

Price One Shilling.

EDITED AND COMPILED BY J. E. CARPENTER.

Fcap. 24mo., boards, with fancy covers. (Postage 2*d.*)

1 Modern Song Book
2 Popular Song Book
3 New Universal Song Book
4 Comic Song Book
5 National Song Book
6 Humorous Song Book
7 New British Song Book
8 New Standard Song Book
9 Entertainer's Song Book
10 Comic Vocalist
11 New Scotch Song Book
12 New Irish Song Book

ROUTLEDGE'S SIXPENNY SONG BOOKS.

EDITED BY J. E. CARPENTER.

Each 144pp. 24mo. fancy covers. (Postage 1*d.*)

1 Fire-Side Song Book
2 Home Songster
3 British Song Book
4 Songs for all Ages
5 Select Songster
6 Convivial Songster
7 Merry Songs for Merry Meetings
8 Funny Man's Song Book
9 Fashionable Song Book
10 Drawing Room Song Book
11 Laughable Song Book
12 Sensation Songster
13 Everybody's Song Book
14 Social Songster
15 Family Song Book
16 Amusing Songster
17 Sociable Songster
18 Songs for all Seasons
19 Droll Ditty Song Book
20 Whimsical Songster
21 Highland Songster
22 Blue Bell Songster
23 Shamrock Songster
24 Mavourneen Songster

ROUTLEDGE'S USEFUL LIBRARY.

INCLUDING THE SHILLING *LAW* BOOKS.

In fcap. 8vo., cloth limp, or cloth boards.

Price One Shilling per Volume unless specified. (Postage 2*d.*)

1 Ladies' and Gentlemen's Letter Writer, containing Letters on the Simplest Matters of Life, with applications for Situations, and a copious Appendix of Forms of Addresses, &c.

*** The Ladies' and Gentlemen's Letter Writer, in separate books, 6*d.* each

3 Landmarks of the History of England. 1*s.* 6d. *Rev. Jas. White.*
4 Landmarks of the History of Greece, with a Map. 1*s.* 6*d. Rev. J. White.*
6 Martin Doyle's Things Worth Knowing, a Book of General Practical Utility
7 Landlord and Tenant (The Law of), with an Appendix of Useful Forms, Glossary of Law Terms *W. A. Holdsworth.*
9 History of France, from the Earliest Period to the Peace of Paris, 1856 *Amelia Edwards.*
10 Wills, Executors, and Administrators (The Law of), with Useful Forms *W. A. Holdsworth.*
11 Rundell's Domestic Cookery, unabridged, with Illustrations *W. T. Coleman, M.D.*
13 Notes on Health: How to Preserve or Regain it
15 Common Objects of the Microscope, with 400 Illustrations by Tuffen West *Rev. J. G. Wood.*
16 Law of Bankruptcy *W. A. Holdsworth.*
17 One Thousand Hints for the Table, including Wines
21 The County Court Guide, with Forms *W. A. Holdsworth.*
22 Geology for the Million, by M. Plues, edited by the Rev. J. G. Wood
23 Handy Book of Criminal Law *W. A. Holdsworth.*
24 Licensed Victualler's Handbook *W. A. Holdsworth.*
25 How to Make Money. *E. T. Freedly.*
26 Household Law. 2*s. A. Fonblanque.*
27 Infant Management. *Mrs. Pedley.*
28 Practical Housekeeping. *Do.*
29 A Manual of Weathercasts *Steinmetz*
30 Commercial Letter Writer *P. L. Simmonds*
31 The Law of Cabs and Omnibuses *W. T. Charley*
32 Home Book of Domestic Economy *Anne Bowman.*
33 Common Things of Everyday Life *Anne Bowman.*

LONDON: GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS.

KEATING'S COUGH LOZENGES.

TRADE MARK.

THIS UNIVERSAL REMEDY now stand the first in public favour and confidence; this result has been acquired by the test of fifty years' experience. These Lozenges may be found on sale in every British Colony; and throughout India and China they have been highly esteemed wherever introduced. For COUGHS, ASTHMA, and all Affections of the Throat and Chest, they are the most agreeable and efficacious remedy; they do not contain opium or any other deleterious drug, and may therefore be taken with perfect safety by the most delicate constitution.

Important Testimonial to the efficacy of KEATING'S COUGH LOZENGES in Relieving Pulmonary Affections. DAWLISH.

SIR,—The very excellent properties of your Lozenges induces me to trouble you with another testimonial on their behalf. All I can say is, that I have been more or less Consumptive for upwards of three years, and have tried a great number of Lozenges to abate the Cough, but from none have I found such relief as from yours—even one of them will check the most violent attack. They are invaluable, and I strongly recommend them to persons suffering from Cough or Cold on the Chest. Pray make any use of this you please, if worth your while.

I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,
ABRAHAM TURNER.

To Mr. KEATING.

Prepared and sold in Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and Tins, 2s. 9d., 4s. 6d., and 10s. 6d. each, by THOMAS KEATING, Chemist, &c., 79, St. Paul's Churchyard, London. Sold retail by all Druggists.

KEATING'S PERSIAN INSECT DESTROYING POWDER.

This Powder is QUITE HARMLESS to ANIMALS, but unrivalled in destroying Fleas, BUGS, Emmets, Flies, Cockroaches, Beetles, Gnats, Mosquitoes, Moths in Furs, and every other species of Insect, in all stages of metamorphosis.

A small quantity of it placed in the crevices of a bedstead will destroy Bugs, and as long as it remains they will not re-appear.

It is indispensable to Travellers by Rail or Steamboat, and Visitors to the Sea-side, for protecting Bedding and Cabins from FLEAS, BUGS, COCKROACHES, MOTHS, and MOSQUITOES.

Rubbed into the skin of DOGS, CATS, or other DOMESTIC ANIMALS, it completely annihilates FLEAS, TICKS, and ALL OTHER VERMIN. It is extremely useful for sprinkling about the Nests of POULTRY, in PIGEON HOUSES, GREENHOUSES, &c. It is perfectly harmless in its nature, and may be applied without any apprehension, as it has no qualities deleterious to animals.

BLACK BEETLES.—Dusted about the haunts of these loathsome insects, it so stupifies them that they may be easily swept up and destroyed.

Placed in Drawers, Chests, or Wardrobes, it protects Furs, Woollen Clothes, &c., from Moths.

From P. L. SIMMONDS, Esq., F.R.G.S., F.S.S., *Author of "A Dictionary of Trade Products," "The Commercial Products of the Vegetable Kingdom," &c., &c.*

8, WINCHESTER STREET, S.W., *June 7th*, 1859.

I have long used the Insect Powder for my Museum, and find it the only effectual Preventative for Moths, Insects, and other destroyers of animal and vegetable substances.

To Mr. KEATING.

RED LAND, near HIGHWORTH, WILTS, *June* 19, 1867.

SIR,—I am glad to inform you that your Insect Destroying Powder has done its duty towards destroying Bugs and Fleas and all sorts of other insects, and as it answers my purpose so well, I want another packet, if you please. With thanks,

I remain, your humble Servant, REUBEN ELDRIDGE.

To Mr. KEATING.

Sold in Packets, 1s., Tins, 2s. 6d., and 4s. 6d. each; or 1s. Packets, free by post for 12 Postage Stamps, and 2s. 6d. on receipt of 36. Also in Bottles, 1s. 2d., and with Bellows, 1s. 6d. and 3s. each, by THOMAS KEATING, Chemist, &c., 79, St. Paul's Churchyard, London, E.C.